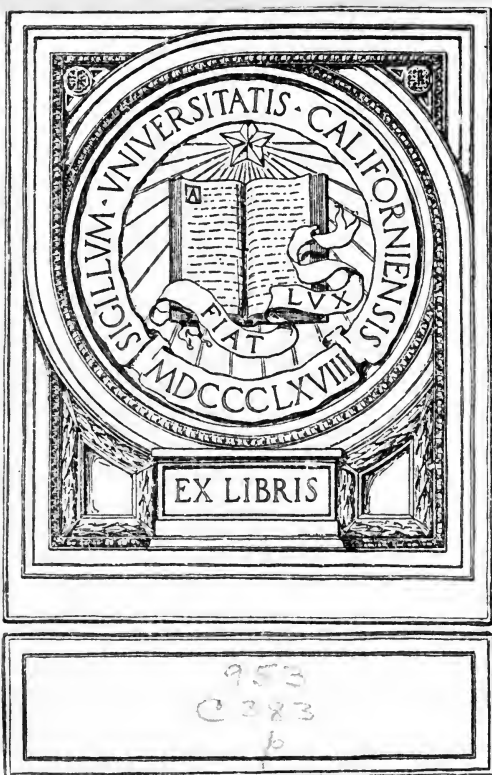


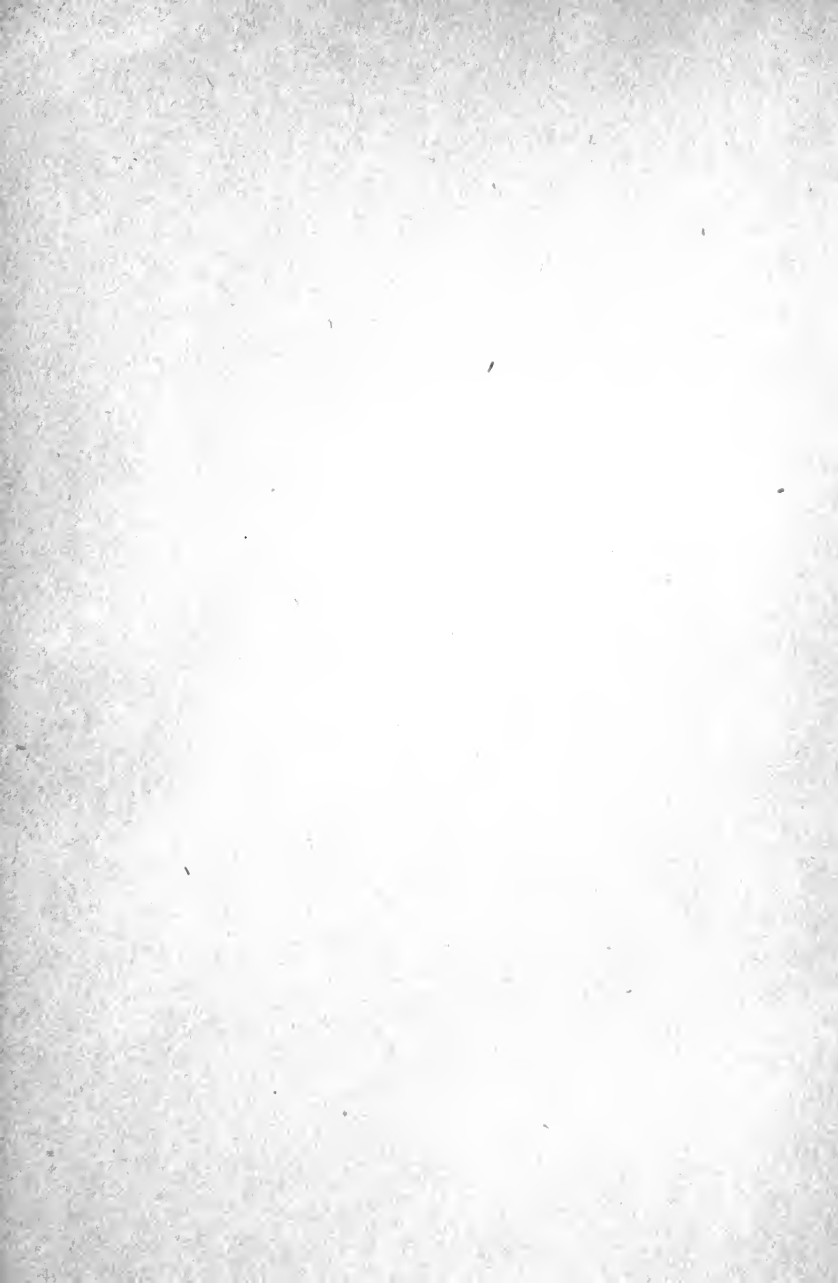
THE POET
THE FOOL
and the
FÆRIES

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves, including a large bell-shaped flower at the top and a maple leaf in the center, framing the author's name.

By
MADISON
CAWEIN







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AND
THE FAERIES

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THE POET, THE FOOL AND THE FAERIES

BY
MADISON CAWEIN



BOSTON
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PUBLISHERS

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BY MADISON CAWEIN



THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

TO
ALICE MONROE PAPE

GIFTED AND BEAUTIFUL

SHE DIED YOUNG

*The leaves are fading ; and on sea and shore
An autumn sadness falls : the world grows wan ;
And through the dusk the wind sweeps wearily on,
Sighing for Summer days that are no more.
We three, who once were four, — ah, happy four ! —
Our narrow circle round the hearth have drawn,
A ring, from which the queenliest gem is gone,
Whose empty setting nothing will restore.
Oh, unbelievable ! that never again
Shall that bright presence fill the house with light !
Like a fair taper, burning silver clear :
Whose fire is ashes now, — but not in vain,
Since here it shone for us, and through the night
Would guide us, shining, to some higher sphere.*

Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass.

September, 1911

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THE COMMON EARTH

THE POET, THE FOOL, AND THE FAERIES

A LYRICAL ECLOGUE

SCENE: *A woodland among hills.*

TIME: *The Present.*

POET

*Well! well! as I'm a poet, here's a fool!
What does he here?*

FOOL

*What, sir, but keep him cool,
And pass the time of day with such as you.*

POET

*Why, that's my fool now! One that Shake-
speare knew! —
Are we in Arden, then?*

FOOL

That's telling tales.

POET

Aye! it is Arden.

4 THE POET, THE FOOL, AND THE FAERIES

FOOL

*So we're far as that! —
Show me now where Audrey and Touchstone
sat.*

POET

*Take it from me, upon this mossy mat;
— There! I'll swear it by your bauble's bat,
Or — my last poem.*

FOOL

*Ah! then Poetry ails,
Since you will swear, by her, to what is lies?*

POET

*Not only does she ail, good Fool, but dies;
Such is the verdict of the worldly wise. —
But when I saw her last she looked not ill;
There was a happy light in her clear eyes. —
That she was dying is impossible.*

FOOL

*But nothing is impossible. — You're here!
A poet in these woods! — Your poet, — well —
Keeps to the town where there is atmosphere.*

POET

*Then diagnose me what a poet is,
Or should be, Fool.*

FOOL

Now, by the cap I wear!

*Since Kings command, here's my analysis —
No poet he of mart or thoroughfare.*

He measures facts by a gleam o' the moon,
And calendars days by dreams;
He values less than a wild bird's tune
The world of mortal schemes:
He dons the pack of the Work-and-Wait,
On the trail of the Never-Sure,
And whistles a song as he faces Fate
To follow the far-off lure.

He says a word to the butterfly,
And its mottled dream is his;
He whispers the bee, and it makes reply
With a thought like a honeyed kiss:
He speaks the bird, and he speaks the snake,
And the ant in its house of sand,
And their guarded wisdom is his to take,
And their secrets to understand.

He shares his soul with the wayside rose,
His heart with the woodland weed,
And he knows the two as himself he knows,
And the thoughts with which they plead:
To him they speak in confidence,
And he answers them with love,
And hand in hand with their innocence
Strikes out for the trail above.

6 THE POET, THE FOOL, AND THE FAERIES

Sworn comrade he of the rocks and trees,
Companion boon of the brooks;
Through whose hoary tribes he hears and sees
The things that are not in books:
He goes his way of do and dare,
Led on by firefly gleams,
And lays him down with never a care
By the campfire of his dreams.

POET

*That's what I call a goodly bit of news.
How comes it that a fool such things can feel,
And say them too? — 'T is strange.*

FOOL

*'T was but a ruse
To get you into argument.*

POET

*I see.
But I, good Fool, with all you said agree.
Your knowledge now of what a bard should be
Makes to my heart a very strong appeal.
Where did you learn this thing?*

FOOL

*In Arcady.
I have a fair acquaintance with the Muse.*

POET

Indeed?

FOOL

*You see I only need to choose
Of all these things that lie right at my hand, —
That anyone with sense may understand, —
Select my meter and arrange my rhyme,
And there you are! — my discourse moves to
time.*

POET

*Behold the fool turned poet! Come, sir, come!
Song must be heard. Too long has she been
dumb.
All genius is half fool. — What say you now
To a good bout at rhyming?*

FOOL

*Steel to steel,
With “Ho” and “Ha” and “Curse you any-
how”? —
Why I’m your onion! cut or thrust or play —
’Tis easier, sir, than running down at heel.
I’ll foin you — well, an hour or a day
And never falter foot.*

POET

*Have at you! — Pray,
But have a care, my gentle Fool! You know,
Apollo once brought Marsyas to woe.*

FOOL

But you are not Apollo.

POET

Even so.

*And well for you, my Fool: THAT saves your
skin.*

FOOL

I 'm willing to be flayed; so let 's begin.

All around,
In the forest, is enchanted ground: —
Where the sunlight throws
Airy-minted gold
To the lily and rose,
Stretching flowers, like hands, to seize and hold:
Where the brooks unfold
Scrolls of music, crystal melody,
For the hills to hear,
Leaning low an ear,
Many a leafy ear,
Emerald-veined, on many a listening tree;
Where the winds work at their necromance,
Rustling-robed, with hands that glint and
glance,
Weaving, dim a-trance,
Lights and shadows into tapestry,
Glimmering with many a wildflower dance: —
Quaker-Ladies in a saraband,
Twinkling hand in hand;
And, demurely met,
Orchids in a stately minuet,
Flirting eyelids at the amorous bee,

Bird and bee, in lyric ecstasy: —
There, where none may hear,
Magic, Mystery,
Parents of Romance,
Ever near,
Work dim wonders with the rain and sun,
Mist and dew:
There the two
Plot enchantments, old yet always new —
Never hurried; never done
Dreaming, weaving,
All perceiving,
Dreams man's soul is heir unto:
Waving, beckoning him to follow
Down the world, through holt and hollow;
Bidding see with the spirit's eyes,
Heed and hear with the soul's deep heart,
Till the Mind, by the two made wise,
Come to a shadowy world apart,
And, hand in hand with its ecstasies,
Enter the gateway of Surprise,
And find its dreams realities.

POET

*Well rhymed, my Fool. If all men had your
sense
The world would be the wiser.*

FOOL

*That's recompense.
Critics might scorn it; magazines reject.
Howbeit, Poet, thanks for your respect.*

POET

*You've made me somewhat thoughtful with
your theme;
And since 't is Spring I cannot help but dream.*

Where the orchid's faery flowers
Lamp the forest ways with pearl,
And the sibyl woodland hours
Gossip with the thrush and merl:
Where the hill-born waters run,
Bluebell-aproned in the sun,
Each one madcap as a girl
Dancing with wild hair awlirl:

Where the bluet blossoms wink,
Constellating heavens of moss;
And around the wood pool's brink
Iris flowers their bonnets toss:
Where the bird's-foot violet
And the windflower thickly set
Magic snares for hearts that cross,
Wildwood-wandered, at a loss:

There the rough bee, busily,
In the haw tree's house of bloom,
Plies his honeyed industry,
Weaving murmur and perfume,
Spinning cirques of sorcerous sound,
Where old Time is drowsy-bound,
Like to Merlin, fallen on doom,
Captive in a gleaming gloom.

Wheresoe'er the feet may stray
Earth with mystery is tense;
Every tree trunk hides a fay,
Every fern is pixy dense:
Elfland lays an ambuscade
In each wonder-guarded glade,
Taking prisoner the sense
With compelling indolence.

Till the spirit vision clears,
And before the eyes, behold!
Beauty's very self appears,
As the Greeks believed of old:
In the rapture of her gaze
Glow the joy of other days;
In her tresses all the gold
Of the faery tales long told.

Still she keeps her body fair
For the soul that knows not art;
Innocent and free of care
Low she whispers to the heart,
As in childhood, when you knew,
And in dreams she came to you,
In a place remote, apart,
Elfdom, that is on no chart.

Still within her bower she waits
For the moment, long removed;
Till, delivered of the Fates,
Wakes again the soul that loved:

And to it shall be revealed
 Secrets that she kept concealed;
 And the dream, which long behooved, —
 Real as earth, — again be proved.

FOOL

*You're not so far wrong as it may appear
 When't comes to faeries. — Hark now! in your
 ear:*

*I have a secret I have longed to tell
 To some good friend; and it concerns this dell.*

Where the path leads through this dell
 All the way is under spell:
 There, beneath the old oak tree,
 Where the light lies dim at noon,
 Elfland held its revelry,
 Danced and left its yellow shoon: —
 You may call them, if you choose,
 Whippoorwill-shoes.

There between a stalk and stem,
 Where the crowfoot hangs its gem,
 Golden in the fern's green hair,
 Swings a hammock, dips a bed,
 Faeryland has woven there
 Out of mist and moonbeam thread: —
 Never web was spider spun
 Like this one.

Yonder fungus, pink and brown,
Which the slim snail silvers down
Cautiously, as if afraid
Of intrusive visitors,
Is a table ouphens laid
For their feast beneath the stars:—
Never mushroom, you may wis,
Was like this.

To this tree now lay your ear:
In its heart you too may hear
Whispered wonders, as have I:
How, in frog-skin pantaloons,
Moth-wing gown and butterfly,
Pixies tripped here by the moon:—
Never breeze, or sap, I know,
Murmurs so.

Now and then, whence none can tell,
Sudden fragrance sweeps the dell,
And your eyelids flutter to:—
'T is some glamour, elfin-wise,
Passing very near to you,
Putting glimmer in your eyes:—
Never wild-rose scent, or sun,
So could run.

Thus it is I look around
When I tread this faery ground:—
There is witchcraft in the place;
There is magic; there is spell;

14 THE POET, THE FOOL, AND THE FAERIES

You can feel it like a face,
Gazing, yet invisible:
I have felt it; you may feel: —
None reveal.

POET

*I prize your revelation, and believe,
Without a reservation, all you say.
Now, mark you; yonder — do your eyes per-
ceive,
Among the leaves and flowers, what's a-play?
What fancies, — faeries? — call them by that
name —
The two that always must remain the same.*

Like Rapunzel within her tower,
Divinely pale, in sweet distress,
The Mayapple, of fragile flower,
Gives glimpses of its loveliness:
And there, like her the witch detained,
And walled with sleep and many a briar,
The wild rose glimmers, rosy veined,
As if its blushes it restrained,
Soft-dreaming of its heart's desire.

All is at peace: the woods around
Stand silent as authorities
In contemplation. Not a sound
Disturbs their dream of centuries.
Out of their long experience

In green and gold they tell their thought;
And to the soul's divining sense
Deliver all the evidence
Of that for which man's mind has sought.

Retired as happiness that holds
The memory of a grief that's gone,
The humid orchis here unfolds
Its pearl and purple to the dawn.
Around, the bluets, near and far,
Prompt as the skies they imitate,
In multitudes that know no bar,
Reveal their beauty, star on star,
And nothing of their joy abate.

How one frail flower like this can make
Immortal to the memory
A place, a moment, with the ache
Of something more than eyes can see!
And how the soul will cling to it, —
And in its thought immortalize
The happiness whereon it hit
In that one moment exquisite
When Beauty took it by surprise.

FOOL

*Now I'll be open with you, Poet. — See,
Now you're my friend since you believe like
me.*

16 THE POET, THE FOOL, AND THE FAERIES

*Why, I have seen things — faeries! Yes, right
here!*

I'll tell you of them. Listen. Lend your ear.

I sat with woodland dreams one night,
Before the moon rose round and white,
And saw the moth-like minions dim,
Who guard the wild rose when asleep,
Come forth: The spirits, small and slim
(Gold-Pollen, Prickle, Rain-Bright, Trim),
Who hang around each wildflower's rim
Its carcanet of dew, and keep
Its fair face clean of things that creep.

I saw them, busily as ants,
Hang with pale gold the woodland plants:
On bindweed tendrils, one by one,
I saw them loop long rows of bells,
That swung in crystal unison;
Then up the silken primrose run
(Moth-Feather, Tripsy, Light-Foot, Fun),
And to the stars unclasp its shells,
That filled with sweetness all the dells.

I saw the shapes that house in trees,
That guard the nests of birds and bees:
Like sudden starlight gleamed their hands
And leaf-like bodies, glimmering green,
When through the woods they moved in bands
(Wisp, Foxfire, Burr, Jock-o'-the-Brands),
And dotted night with firefly wands;

Peering with pin-point eyes between
The fernleaves for some harm unseen.

I saw the fancies wild, for whom
The crickets violin the gloom,
Lead in a pageant long of dreams;
To see which even the sleepy snail
Thrust out its horns; and from the streams
(Spraytop- and Ripple-chased it seems),
The trout leapt silvery, showering gleams
Of beryl 'thwart the pearly pale
Low moon that raised her faery sail.

'And with the moon came presences
Of gnome-like things that toil mid trees;
That build the ghost-flower in a night;
And set their grotesque shoulders to
The toadstool's root and heave it white
(Troll, Nixen, Kobold, Glowwormlight),
Into the star dusk; and pull tight
The webs that frost themselves with dew
Adown each woodland avenue.

I saw them rouse the moth and ride
The spider forth; and rein and guide
The grumbling beetle on its way;
And prick the slow slug so it 'd see
The fungus ruff of red and gray
(Lob, Fly-by-Night, and Lanthornray),
Where it could gorge itself all day;

The agaric, which, tirelessly,
They 'd wrung from out the old dead tree.

These things I saw: Then shapes of musk
In herby raiment swarmed the dusk;
They rose from moss and rotted wood,
From loam and leaf and weed and flower:
Midge-winged they swept the solitude
(Rosehip and Fernseed, Lily-Snood),
A vague, ephemeral sisterhood,
That stole the sweetness from each bower,
To give it back within the hour.

Then slighter forms of film and foam
Rose from the streams and sat, a comb
Of moon-pearl in their hands: the fays,
Who herd the minnows; keep from harm
The dragonfly that sleeps or sways
(Foam-Flutter, Starstep, Ripple-Rays),
Like some bright jewel, on the Day's
White breast, when, starred, a golden charm,
The water-lily opens warm.

And then I saw them cloud the air, —
Elf shapes, that came with flying hair,
Winding their gnat-like bugles: sprites,
That help the spider when it weaves
Its web; or, lamped with glowworm lights
(Prank, Heavyhead, Bob-up-o'-Nights),
Guide bats and owlets in their flights,

Or toads to where the mushroom heaves
Its rosy round through loam and leaves.

These are the dreams I sat with when
The owlet hooted in the glen;
These are the dreams that came before
My eyelids in this forest gray —
Children of Fancy, Faery Lore, —
Puck, Ariel, and many more, —
Wearing the face that erst they wore
For Shakespeare; and, in some strange way,
As real now as in his day.

POET

*Since you have spoken, Sir, I'll tell you what
Occurred to me upon this selfsame spot,
When soul-sick of the world I sought this wood,
Knowing my heartache would be understood.*

I took the old wood at its word,
And flung me on its lap of moss;
Its shimmering arms above me stirred,
And green its bosom heaved across.
I felt its cool breath on my cheek,
As low it leaned to see my face,
Whispering, "What is it, son, you seek?
What is it that you would replace?
What have you lost? what would you find? —
Is it your heart? or peace of mind?"

I heard its question, not with ears,
 But with an inward sense of grief:
 Words would not come, but only tears,
 Slow tears, that brought me no relief.
 Again the whisper: "Is it love?
 Or aspirations you have prized?
 Or loss of faith in God above?
 Or some far dream unrealized?" —
 "I know not how," my soul replied,
 "But Poetry, meseems, has died."

Then for a space the wood was still. —
 A teardrop fell; — or was it rain
 I felt upon my face; the chill
 Glad tears of Nature? — Then again,
 Was it her joy? — or just the storm
 She gathered to her breast awhile?
 Then, quickly, was it sunlight warm?
 Or on her face a quiet smile?
 As low I heard her answer thrill —
 "Here in my arms Song slumbers still."

And, oh, I wakened as from dreams,
 And saw her there, — Song, dim as moss:
 And heard her voice, which is the streams,
 Rill from her pure throat leaned across:
 And all around me, flower on flower,
 I saw her wild thoughts gleam and glow;
 And through them, by some subtle power,
 Beheld my soul's dreams come and go.

Long mourned as dead, no more to part,
I took her sobbing to my heart.

FOOL

*Why, you are Nature's favored son, I see.
But hark you now: She too has let me know
Soul-intimacy: Once with eyes of glee
She made the Wind's self visible to me —
The elfin Wind! — You were not favored so.*

I saw her there among the leaves,
A slender spirit none perceives,
The Wind, who still her magic weaves,
Romancing:
I heard her feet, as soft as thieves';
And then the silken swish of sleeves,
Steal 'round the forest's fluttered eaves,
A-dancing.

She leaned and whispered in the ear
Of every wildflower something dear, —
How to protect their hearts from fear
Of dying:
Then took the thistle's feathery sphere
And glimmered it across the mere,
Or on a cobweb, trailing near,
Went flying.

The butterfly, that comes and goes,
She tosses on the wilding rose;
Then teases

22 THE POET, THE FOOL, AND THE FAERIES

The blossomed bee that whines; and blows
Into each bud till wide it grows;
When swift its musk that overflows
She seizes.

Then fine and fair away she trips,
Wood perfume on her wildwood lips,
To where, with twinkling fingertips,
Day's daughter,
The Gloaming, waits; and Silence drips:
There from her gown of light she slips,
And with the star of twilight dips
The water.

POET

*Surely you have good eyes, Sir. — Long ago
The ancient wisdom of the world, that Snake
Of God's own Eden, in such shapes did show
Himself to mortals, making their senses ache
With longings for a loveliness that drew
The mind of man beyond the things he knew.*

The Snake, that once in Eden spake,
The ancient Snake, that wrought our woe,
Still lies with bright green eyes awake
By every wildwood path we go:
We may not see him; may not know:
But still he waits eternal there
Watching whatever way we fare.

We feel his presence in the leaves,
That murmur of forgotten things:
Of longings, and of love that grieves
For whilom joys and happenings:
Of vanished lights and broken wings,
And all the perished host, it seems,
That once made fair the hills and streams.

We hear him whispering in the trees,
And in the waters of the rocks,
Of wildwood dreams and mysteries,
That 'tend the visionary flocks
Of Beauty who, eluding, mocks
'All efforts of the human mind
To seize her and forever bind.

We see his eyes at sunset flame
'And pierce the centuried forest through,
Looking the things that have no name,
To which our longings are a clue; —
'And memories of lives we knew
Flow back from outer nothingness
Upon our souls to curse or bless.

'Amorphous, dim, he folds us round
In darkness, like another night:
His rustling body wreathes the ground,
His eyeballs burn with emerald light:
We hear and see and feel his might, —
That made religions once of old, —
With worship of dead myths take hold.

He is a part of what we see
 Yet do not see; of what we hear
 Yet never hear: within each tree
 And rock and stream he watches near,
 Addressing now the spirit ear
 With thoughts; and now the spirit eye
 With dreams that pass but never die.

FOOL

*That takes me back to times when men wore
 skins;
 When Earth teemed dragons; tons, that soared,
 with wings;
 Or isled the ocean with enormous fins:
 Primordial guesses at approaching things.
 Why, while you spoke, in mind I seemed to go
 Back to creation; to the very day
 God wrought a mate for man. Meseems I know,
 Yes, am quite sure, He made her in this way.*

I saw Him first set up a bone,
 'And breathe on it until it shone
 And grew a heart, to curse or bless,
 And filled with love and wantonness,
 All Hell's delight, all Heaven's distress.

Then to Himself God smiling said,
 "The heart's the least; far more the head."
 He shaped the head; then molded fair
 The bright destruction of her hair,
 'And therein made for man a snare.

In front He painted fresh her face,
All innocent, divine of grace;
But underneath the angel mien
He hid a devil, dark, unclean,
A monster thing whose gaze was green.

Into the face He set the eyes,
Full of beguilement and surmise,
Of prayer and passion, make-believe,
And tears and laughter, to deceive
The heart of man God meant to grieve.

The nose and mouth He fashioned next:
The nose precise; the mouth perplexed
With virtue and the quenchless thirst
For fruit forbidden, blest and curst
With longings for life's best and worst.

Then loud God laughed and spake again:
"Without the body all were vain!" —
And underneath the head he set
The throat and breasts, like roses met,
And arms; all portions of the net.

The torso then and limbs of snow
He made and fixed them fair below:
And in her feet and in her breast
He breathed the spirit of unrest
And vanity of soul distressed.

"Behold!" God said, "my masterpiece!
Through whom the world shall know increase. —
And man will give me thanks, I know,
And laud My work, and, heart aglow,
Accept My gift and all his woe."

POET

*No woman 'd thank you for that, understand!
What an arraignment of the sex! — You went
A little far there, friend. And, out of hand,
You are a fool who has grown insolent;
That's what fair Eve would say. — Look where
yon cloud
Takes on strange shape, with pearl and azure
browed:
Perhaps it beckons us, — what do you say? —
To fairer dreams of the lost Far Away.*

✓
Far away, oh, far away,
Where the clouds grow up and the shadows gray;
Where twilight dreams and the rain-wind sleeps,
And the cloud-born waterfall, singing, leaps.
Oh, there, whatever the soul may say, —
Far away, aye, far away, —
Is the happy Land of Yesterday.

Loveliness walks on its hills, and sighs;
And friendship smiles from its oldtime skies;
Love, like a maid who walks in dreams,
Flutters with white its vales and streams:

And over it all a gladness lies, —
As soft as eyes, as love's own eyes, —
And heart's ease, breathing slumberous sighs.

Never near, oh, never near,
That Land where dreams of the heart appear;
Where Revery lays her spirit bare,
And Mystery lures with golden hair:
Oh, there, whatever the heart may hear, —
Never near, yes, never near, —
Is the Land of Ghosts that our hearts hold dear.

Witchery waits by its lonely ways
With mild-eyed dreams of other days;
And down old paths, where young feet went,
Faith, with her open testament,
Walks with Hope through the golds and grays
Of oldtime ways, remembered ways,
The look in her face of long-past Mays.

Never near and far away
Are the lone, lost Lands of Yesterday
And dim To-morrow, where dream and ghost
Wander and whisper and beckon us most.
Open your gates in the Cloudland gray,
Never near and far away,
And let us in where our longings stray.

FOOL

*Well, you and I can always journey there:
We have the receipt of fernseed. But beware!*

*How you step yonder, by that tree. — Meseems
I saw a Faery hide there. — How absurd! —
It's but a burnished beetle. How it gleams!
It could tell tales now, if it would! — my word!*

Last night beneath this ancient tree,
Dim in the moonlight and the ferns,
The elfin folk held revelry,
I know by what my soul discerns
Mysteriously.

For, look you, where yon circle runs
Of bluets, winking very wise,
The rapture of those tricky ones
Has put confusion in their eyes,
That meet the sun's.

And, mark you, how the toadstool there
Protrudes its bulk in Falstaff state;
It too has seen, I well will swear,
An elf, and learned to imitate
His pompous air.

And where that lichen lays a streak
Of rose, fair as a flowering stock,
The place but recollects *her* cheek,
The fay's, who danced upon this rock
Above the creek.

And, hark! between this rock and root,
Where, shrill, the cricket pipes away,

A faery dropped a magic flute,
That never stops, but still must play
For faery foot.

And that same beetle, glittering by,
Has mailed itself, as it has seen
Titania's guard, in royal dye
Of bronz and green, when round their queen
They caught its eye.

The toad that squats, observing naught,
By yonder mushrooms' bench and bar,
Has donned the Puck-wise look he caught
From Oberon's chief councilor
In judgment sought.

The bees that murmur drowsy here,
The gnats and wood-flies, but repeat
The music which a sleepy ear
Caught when all Elfland rose to greet
Queen Mab with cheer.

Oh, there is more than eye may see,
That to the moon is visible! —
If it could speak, this ancient tree,
What would it say? what would it tell
Of Faërie?

But it — it keeps its council close,
As do the crickets and the flowers: —
Ah, could it speak and tell of those!

What tales we'd hear, of elfin powers!
 What things none knows!

POET

*Spring's taken full possession of your brain,
 And I can feel it working here in mine;
 Why, there she stands with all her radiant train,
 The Spring herself, beneath a wildgrape-vine.*

There her beauty dons a gown
 White of dogwood blooms,
 And goes dreaming up and down
 Through the wood's dim rooms;
 Waters, falling, make a sound
 Like her heart's full beat;
 And the silence all around
 Rustles with her feet.

There the iris, timidly,
 From its hood of dew,
 To the wind that wanders by
 Lifts an eye of blue:
 Here the cautious violet,
 As if it could hear
 Music none has dreamed of yet,
 Lays to earth an ear.

There the winds on tiptoe tread,
 Lullabying low
 To the bee whose blossom-bed
 Rocks now fast, now slow.

Here the sunlight, like a charm,
Lays a touch of gold,
As if summoning some form,
Gnome-like, from the mold.

Here the Mayapple, that seems
In a wax-white trance,
With suggestions of its dreams
Clouds its countenance.
On the hush no sound intrudes,
Save a redbird's song,
And the wood-brook's interludes
Singing low along.

Presences of wind and light,
Myths, the Spring gives form,
Glow upon the spirit-sight,
With compelling charm;
Blushing into bloom and breeze,
Making sweet the house,
Where the white Spring takes her ease
Under blossoming boughs.

Grant me, Heaven, eyes to see,
Evident of grace,
Her divine virginity,
Naked, face to face!
All her goddess loveliness,
So I may adore,
Like Tiresias of old,
Blind forevermore.

FOOL

*Now you have said it! — Things seem all agog
For something that has happened or will hap:
Why, look you there, even this moldering log
Has clothed itself in moss, and spreads its lap
For some wild sylvan's seat; or for the Queen
Of all the Wood Sprites to survey the scene.*

The flag-flower flies an azure streak;
The dogtooth violet bugles out:
What festival, beside this creek,
Is Faeryland about?

The bluebell in the wind swings peals
Of azure, and the poppies chime
A golden call, whose sound reveals
How Elfland trips to time.

Such ecstasy as that which sings,
Compelling, in each root and seed,
And in the egg wakes wilding wings
That flutter to be freed.

Soul music, ear has never heard,
That breathes o'er earth its living breath,
And flings Life's last triumphant word
Full in the face of Death.

· POET

Death? death? — There is no death! — I know!
— And why? —

*I've been to Avalon, the shadowy Isle,
And know the Beautiful can never die,
That God permitted for a little while
To walk the Earth and cheer us with its smile.*

For I have been in Avalon,
And walked its glimmering groves among,
And talked with Beauty, dead and gone,
And Love that lives in ancient song.
Yes, I have been in Avalon:
Therefore, you see, my brow is wan.

Remembering still the look of those
Sore-wounded ones, who loved in vain,
Whose lives are wrapped now in repose,
Freed from the vassalage of pain,
An inner peace my spirit wears
Regardful of that look of theirs.

Pale violet were the belting seas,
And violet too both hill and dale;
And, unremembering, over these
The heaven like a violet pale;
And cliff and mountain from the steep
Let down dim streams as if asleep.

And here and there the ancient woods
Spread mighty and majestic robes,

Wherein were woven attitudes
Of beauty, marble-pale: dim globes
And towers of loveliness, it seemed
The Island into being dreamed.

No sun I saw; I saw no moon:
But twilight dreamed forever there,
With shadowy starlight all a-swoon,
Above the blue and quiet air:
While all around, from east to west,
The consecration lay of rest.

There saw I queens of old romance,
And glimmering kings of legend pass;
And on their brows and in their glance
I read their dreams as in a glass:
And, of my soul remembered yet,
The dreams have taught me to forget.

But in their hearts my heart could read
No memory of what had been;
No old regret for thought or deed,
Or that they once were king and queen.
They had forgotten all thereof —
The hate of earth as well as love.

Long time I spake them, dim, apart;
Long time I talked with queen and king,
While through the heaven of my heart
Oblivion trailed a twilight wing;
And on my spirit's lifted brow
Was poured the peace that haunts it now.

Yes, I have been in Avalon,
The faery Isle in faery seas;
Therefore it is my face is wan,
My heart at peace remembering these.
It may not be, and yet — I seem
Forever waking from a dream.

FOOL

*That's where I came from. I'm a prisoner,
too,*

*In this mad world. Why, I was Dagonet,
King Arthur's fool. 'T was there I met with
you:*

*And you were Tristram. — I cannot forget
How well you sang once of the fair Isolt;
You dare not tell me that you have forgot? —
These airs of Spring help memory a lot. —
The world is changed since then, or I'm a dolt.*

Is that the acid sorrel
And honey-scented clover? —
Or can it be a quarrel
Of wood nymphs in the cover?
Who in their leafy wrangle
Shake fragrance from the tangle
Of boughs that wildflowers spangle.

Oh, witchcraft of the sorrel!
Oh, glamour of the clover! —
Do you not glimpse the coral-
Tipped breasts of each wood-lover?

Each dryad, slow unsheathing
 Dim limbs from bark enwreathing
 Her bosom, blossom-breathing?

Oh, sorcery of sorrel!
 Oh, magic of the clover! —
 What glimmers through the laurel?
 What wings its white way over? —
 What myth, that haunts these bowers,
 Child of the winds and flowers,
 Touches this world of ours?

The rosy tips of sorrel,
 And purple cups of clover,
 Bewitch my soul, and star all
 The ways with dreams that hover: —
 Dreams, shadowy as Isis,
 Who somehow there arises,
 Born of my soul's surmises.

POET

*Dreams! dreams! enough of dreams! of myths
 and dreams!*
Here now's reality: a faery flower.
That's substance for you. How its beauty
seems
T' invest the moment with immortal dower!

Flower of the wet wild woodland, lonely flower,
 Trembling in elfin beauty by the brink

Of this wild stream, which murmurs of the
shower,
That brimmed its breast with joy for quite an
hour, —
Would I could read the faery thoughts you
think,
And hear of ouphen marvels, all awink,
That met your eyes last night in this dark
bower!

Dim as the web the spider slenderly
Hammocks at dusk for Dawn to rope with dew;
Pale in the moonbeam, at their revelry,
You have beheld the Elves around this tree
Wild-whirling. And could we but learn of you,
Then might we find of Faeryland the clue,
The shibboleth, the open sesame.

That world our childhood entered, manhood
lost:

Invisible except unto the heart:

A world whose far dominions none has crossed:
That to the soul shows its immortal coast
But once in life; and, intimated part
Of all our dreams, strives ever through high art
To make them real to the uttermost.

Ah, flower of the whirlwind and the rain!
Frail forest flower, on whose lip of spar
Spring leaves her chilly kiss, a rosy stain,
What profits all this dreaming, since again,

The clue escapes us? hope, that leads us far,
Teasing the soul beyond its mortal bar,
Only to find, alas! all dreams are vain.

FOOL.

*There spoke no botanist, upon my word!
But a true poet, Sir. Why, even a fool
Can see through that. All dreaming is absurd
To sordid souls, who come not here to school. —
Look! there are wild peas, bless them! — and
they dream
Of other things, I think, than that they seem.*

Here's the tavern of the bees:
Here the butterflies, that swing
Velvet cloaks, and to the breeze
Whisper soft conspiracies,
Pledge their Lord, the Faery King:
Here the hotspur hornets bring
Fiery word, and drink away
Heat and hurry of the day.

Here the merchant bee, his gold
On his thigh, falls fast asleep;
And the armored beetle bold,
Like an errant-knight of old,
Feasts and tipples pottles-deep:
While the friar crickets keep
Creaking low a drinking-song,
Like an Ave, all day long.

Here the baron bumblebee,
Grumbling in his drowsy cup,
Half forgets his knavery:
Dragonflies sip swaggeringly,
Cavaliers who stop to sup:
To whose brag come whining up
Gnats, the thieves, that tap the tuns
Of the honeyed musk that runs.

Here the jewelled wasp, that goes
On his swift highwayman way,
Seeks a moment of repose,
Drains his cup of wine-of-rose,
Sheathes his dagger for the day:
And the moth, in downy gray,
Like some lady of the gloom,
Slips into a perfumed room.

When the darkness cometh on,
Round the tavern, golden green,
Fireflies flit with torches wan,
Looking if the guests be gone,
Linkboys of the Faery Queen:
Lighting her who rides, unseen,
To her elfin sweetpea bower,
Where she rests a scented hour.

POET

*Yes; there is witchcraft in these woods. — Right
there,
Beyond those vales, are hills where I have been*

*And talked with visions. If I did but dare,
I too might tell you of the things I've seen.*

Old hills, that break the far horizon's fall,
Within my heart again I hear you call,
Bidding me come and talk with mysteries
Of woodlands where, pale-pooled, the waters lie,
In whose enchanted glass the forest sees
Its form reflected and the dreams go by
Of silence and of solitude, who keep
Watch round their mirrors, gazing long and
deep.

My hills! gray-peopled with the wraiths of
rain —
Mist-ghosts, that gather and dissolve again:
Pale exhalations that, in dim retreats
Of foam and fern, above the slim cascade
Fling wild a rainbow; or, in slender sheets
Of foggy stealth, phantom the dripping glade,
Where Witchcraft cabins with her wildflower
spells,
Filling the wood with magic of their bells.

Hills, that the moon's white feet, how oft! have
kissed:
Where wan Endymion and his dreams keep
tryst:
Where the pale soul of Beauty doth abide,
Whispering her legends, to the cradled flowers,

Of filmy things, moth-gowned and glowworm-
eyed,
Who lace the ways and gossamer the bowers
With webs for dew to tiptoe and bewitch
With pearl and crystal till each weed is rich.

Hills, from whose breasts, in drowsy fancy, rise
The perfume-thoughts of flowers; fragrant
sighs;
And dim damp dreams of fungi: imagings
Of Haunters of the ferns who, through the
night,
Speed thin the tumult of invisible wings,
That take the heart with terror and delight,
Dreaming it hears the nymph who fled from
Pan,
And all the immortal myths that with her ran.

Old hills! beyond you, in my soul I know,
Still lies the Wonderland of Long Ago,
High-mountained and deep-valleyed; elfed with
streams,
Where old Enchantment builds her bower of
bloom,
And Magic rears his City of Lost Dreams,
Templed with glory that no time shall doom:
The shadow of whose marvels, as of old,
Still lures me in the sunset's towers of gold.

FOOL

*From following that lure you got that look.
 The mystery is solved why you are here,
 And I can see now why your eye's so clear. —
 I, too, have walked with spirits; by this brook;
 The lonely spirits of the changing year.*

✓ One haunts the woods that Spring makes wet,
 Trailing faint skirts of violet:
 She sits between the shade and shine
 And turns to heaven a trillium-face,
 Plaiting her locks of celandine
 That ripple to her throat's green lace
 Of ferns, whereat, ethereal blue,
 The iris sparkles, gemmed with dew.

'And I have met the one who goes,
 With hands of berry-stain and rose,
 With Summer. Or divined her near
 By some warm wind's dim evidence
 Of lily scent or lavender,
 Or plum, red-ripening by some fence,
 Near which she sat with head a-nod,
 Rich-robed in broom and goldenrod.

But in the rotting woods of Fall
 She turns a witch and with wild call
 Walks arm in arm with Death, and shakes
 A head of moldy moss and grass;
 Her weedy cloak among the brakes

Hangs torn; and wheresoe'er she pass
The woods grow conscious of decay,
And pulpy toadstools mark her way.

In Winter I have found her dead,
The berried thorn about her head;
Her face, an icy fragment, cold,
Rimmed with white locks of frost and snow;
Her tattered shroud, the tarnished gold
Of leaves that on the old beech blow;
And in her withered hand the last
Wild thistle, twisted by the blast.

POET

*Yes, you have met them. I, too, let me tell,
Have looked on spirits in this forest dell.
Mark you, — this very moment, while you spoke,
Something befell me that enthrals: It seems
I saw as sees this tree, this ancient oak,
The Presences of beauty Nature dreams.*

There where the whiteheart's blossom clings,
And columbine is frailly flushed,
Just where that cat-bird sings and swings,
And water wild is rushed, —
The old oak crooked its arm at me,
That branch, and said, "Come here and
see!" —

And, with a hand of witchery,
A leaf my forehead brushed.

And, lo, a voice, like some old friend's,
Spoke softly, — "See what none has seen: —
Where myth begins and matter ends,
And all that lies between." —
And, lo! the dream which haunts the rose
Took on faint form; and, at repose,
The thought, which in the tree's heart grows,
Revealed itself in green.

I saw the spirit, white and wild,
That dances with the waterfall;
And like the beauty of a child
Hangs laughing over all:
I saw the faery of the fern
Swing wet its web at every turn;
And in the dew the pixy burn
Who holds the grass in thrall.

I saw the sylphids of the light
Gleam into being — print the ground;
And with them, whispering into sight,
The wind with wildflowers crowned:
I saw the sylvan sit at ease
Behind the bark of covering trees;
And in the brambles, watching these,
The Faun whom none hath bound.

I saw the harmony around, —
Bee-murmur, wing-beat, burst of song, —
Evolve a silvery shape of sound,
That nymph-like moved along:

I saw the happiness that fills
The heart of things, that never stills,
Run with the rapture of the rills,
A goddess straight and strong.

A moment more and I had seen
The soul itself of Beauty bared,
And all that Nature's love may mean
To me had been declared:
Her dreams grotesque, or beautiful,
Her mysteries, — no years annul,
That keep the world from growing dull, —
By me had then been shared.

Between the unknown and the known,
Bewildered with the vision, I
Let go the bough, whose touch had shown
What hides from every eye:
The charm was snapped; the spell was o'er;
The forest lay there as before,
Mere lights and shadows, nothing more,
And winds that whispered by.

FOOL

*She's always dreaming — Nature. There she
goes,
Putting it on her canvas in vast strokes
Of sunset: gold and cinnabar and rose,
That vision forth the glory, say, which glows
Around God's throne, transforming all those
oaks.*

POET

Deep in the west
 A tattered bulk of cloud,
 A magic galleon, gold of hull and shroud,
 Rolls, — ribbed with fire, — on some perilous
 quest:
 Now, from deep rifts
 Of darkening rose,
 A dæmon castle, burning ruby, grows, —
 An Afrit palace which enchantment lifts.

FOOL

The hut on the hilltop,
 The pool in the sand,
 The rock by the wayside
 Seem touched by a hand,
 And answer a summons
 To put off the old,
 Discard their disguises,
 And burn into gold.

POET

Deep in the east
 Th' anticipating sky
 Silvers with light as of a presence nigh,
 Divinity, shepherding clouds, pale, pearly
 fleeced;
 Upon whose view,
 From gradual deeps

Of glimmering dusk, huntress Diana leaps,
Her moonbeam-arrows spearing them through
and through.

FOOL

The heart of the clover,
The soul of the rose,
The spirits of water
And leaves in repose,
Dissolve their enchantment,
And tell to the dusk
The dreams that invest them
With music and musk.

*Madmen or fools that maunder, men would say;
Who'd see no more there than mere golds and
reds,
And name it simply "Sunset"; go their way,
Their minds upon their dinners and their beds.*

POET

*We have our poetry and they have theirs:
Theirs takes a more material form than ours. —
How wild the woods smell now! how sweet the
airs!
Look where the Twilight for her flight pre-
pares;
And drops her brooch, the evening-star she
wears,
At Night's dark feet, on Heaven's topmost
towers.*

When I am dead, my soul shall haunt these
 woods,
As bird or bee,
These dim, grave forests where no foot intrudes
Irreverently.

Where Spring proclaims herself in orchis pale
And moccasin-flower,
And many another bloom that tells its tale
To sun and shower.

Here shall my soul go singing all day long
With wren and thrush,
Or, with the bee, hum honey-sweet among
The hyssoped hush.

Or all night long, wild with the whippoorwill,
Wail to the moon;
Or with the moth slip glimmering, white and
 still,
Where flowers lie strewn.

Here I shall watch and see the ghosts go by
Of all the loves,
The forest lovers who have loved, as I,
Deep woods and groves.

And they will know me — not as bee or bird —
But for a soul
Through whom the forest speaks an ancient
 word
Of joy and dole.

And meditative moods of bliss and pain
Shall with me fare,
And thoughts, that haunt the shimmering sun
and rain,
With irised hair.

And living visions too shall pass me by,
Or with me go
Singing of beauty, who with quiet eye
Shall bid me know.

And to my heart her message shall be clear
In ways unknown;
And dreams, that whispered at my mortal ear,
Shall there be shown.

And I shall speak then with the bird and bee,
And tree and flower,
And they shall know me part of all they see,
And bless the hour.

FOOL

*The dictionaries have a name for all
Who love the woods as you do. I shall call
My poet now, — that is, if he insist, —
No more mere Poet but Nemophilist. —
But dusk draws on, that is — the Elfin's dawn,
My little playmates'. Now their dance begins.
Look where their lanthorns flit, now bright, now
wan. —
No fireflies they, but tripping Faerykins.*

The Night puts on a strange disguise,
A mask and domino of flame,
Through which I see her stealthy eyes
Gaze with a look that has no name:
Before me seems to grow her dream,
Taking the form of gleam on gleam.

A million lights, a million stars
Of twinkling gold with emerald blent,
Between the woods and pasture bars,
Fashion another firmament,
Of faery fire and elfin flame,
That puts the heaven above to shame.

The cedar and the oak are hung
With will-o'-wisps that never cease,
And dark the twinkling fields among
They loom like monster Christmas trees,
Around which, glimmering, glide and glance
The torches of a goblin dance.

What faery fête is this she dreams,
Old Night? What revelry of damps
And dews? in which her darkness gleams
Pale-jewelled, hung with pixy lamps,
That work illusions, mysteries,
Fantastic, in the eye that sees.

Each moment flames a fiery sign
From blade to bush, from bush to tree;
A web of lights, a flickering line
Of stars that quiver constantly;

A pulse of gold that beats delight
Within the viewless veins of Night.

Oh, Puck-wild raptures of the dew,
Oh, Ariel transports of the dusk,
Now let my spirit join with you
And dance within Night's heart of musk,
Until, like you, it come to know
The ouphen wonders there that glow.

POET

*Join you the Masque of Night, but I must go.
I am not worthy of such confidence,
Ignorant, and skeptic often, as you know,
Of many things for which my mind's too dense.
My gentle Fool, to make the matter plain,
I fear I'd spoil your revel. You remain.
My heart stays with you by this forest pool, —
That better part of me men call the fool.*

Now whirling flies, whose whine is like a sting,
Bred of the water, where at noon the snake
Rippled or wreathed, no longer rage and sing,
And by this wood-pool nothing is awake
Except the moth that, like a flower's ghost,
Searches the shadows for a dream long lost.

There in the dusk strange lights define them-
selves,
Glimmer on glimmer and green glow on glow,

Like some fantastic revel of the elves,
 The fireflies flit their torches to and fro;
 Twinkling in faery fête, a drowsy dance,
 The pool repeats with starry necromance.

Hark! — to the pool is given a voice; a throat
 Of raucous music, hoarsening the night;
 Toad-tongued it jars the darkness with one note,
 Making the silence guttural as with fright:
 And now the oak with owlet speech replies,
 The dark rock twitters into bat-winged cries.

And now the wood gives answer: fine and
 sharp,
 Shrilling an insect syllable in each weed,
 Protesting fiercely. On its cricket-harp
 The darkness strums, while, like insistent seed,
 The fireflies sow the night with flame on flame,
 And the dark whippoorwill cries wild its name.

Now all the east's aglow: and, pale around,
 Is pause. And now a rumor shakes the trees —
 A wind that whispers of a beauty found,
 Immortal, godlike, veiled in mysteries:
 And now, upon the hilltop, look! — the moon,
 Diana-like, breasting the woods that swoon.

FOOL

*Again the whippoorwill's dark keenings fall:
 And in my heart they echo — sad, oh, sad!*

*In my fool heart, that cries for things it had,
When it was young; old things beyond recall.*

An old house on a lonely hill;
An apple-tree before its door —
How oft I watched the Springtime spill
Pale petals on its old, worn sill!
And through faint boughs the May moon pour
Its light like some soft spirit!
And, oh, how wild the whippoorwill
Would call! how wildly weird and shrill,
By that gray house upon the hill,
And how I loved to hear it!

The tree is dead; the house is gone;
The old house by the apple-tree;
The whippoorwill that sang till dawn,
Where blossoms pelted lane and lawn,
Will sing no more for Spring and me,
Dim in the moonlight swinging:
But still, ah me! when Spring comes on,
Back to that place my soul is drawn,
Where, glimmering in the tree long gone,
That wild bird still is singing.

POET

*When fools wax sad their listeners must depart:
For Life demands of fools a merry heart. —
I too was young once, and have memories too.
But, ah, the little sister, whom I knew!*

Little sister, faery sister, you whom often I have
heard;
You, dim kin to all the wildflowers and to every
wandering bird;
You, wild portion of all beauty, symbol of all
greenwood lore,
Take me to your heart and hold me as you did
in days of yore.

Little sister, elfin sister, let me feel your eyes
again,
Where the April azure sparkled into dreams of
sun and rain;
In whose deeps, as in high heaven, shot with
shadow and with light,
Glowed the look of far Adventure and the lure
and dare of Flight.

Little sister, shadow sister, let me hear your
voice once more,
With the music of the genii opening an Aladdin
door;
Where the call of every yearning, that the
human heart has known,
Took me to its breast and held me, made my
very soul its own.

Little sister, pixy sister, let me feel again your
hands;
Let their touch again translate me to those far-
off Wonderlands:

Lands of strange unknown allurements, old enchantments, once that held,
Drew my heart with faery fancies in the days
when youth enspelled.

Little sister, forest sister, you, part bird and
part a flower,
Lead me, as you often led me in my childhood,
for an hour,
Past the ranges of the real, into lands where
love allures,
Where the dreams of beauty wander with the
magic that endures.

Little sister, wonder sister, ope again the gates
that rose,
Built of mystery and marvel, in the walls of
Let 's-Suppose;
Of that city of old witchcraft, towered with
Legend of all time,
Where we sat with Song and Story and with all
the Sons of Rhyme.

Little sister, elfin sister, take me back into those
fields,
Partly sunset, partly morning, where the warriors
ride with shields;
Knightly Dreams of fame and glory, and the
Daughters of Desire,
By their sides, on snow-white palfreys, wake in
them the battle-fire.

Little sister, faery sister, tell me whither have
you gone?

You, who whispered me in darkness and ad-
dressed me in the dawn:

You, who fostered me in childhood, told me
dreams that should come true —

Little sister, little sister, ah, the dreams that
went with you!

*The Poet rises and departs. The Fool sits on
the mossy trunk of a fallen tree, elbows on
knees, and chin in palm. He appears to
be listening to something sibilant in earth
and air. Suddenly starting to his feet he
gazes knowingly in a certain direction.
Then smiling furtively to himself he steals
cautiously forward, and, hollowing a hand
to his mouth, talks mysteriously to the
whispering woods.*

*So, so! my Little Sister, we will play. —
Come forth! come forth, O you my Poet lost!
I know the tree you hide in all' the day.
Come forth, my Little Sister, and be tossed. —
Come! come! my Ladykin, no more delay!
Come forth! come forth! and bring along with
you*

*Ariel and Puck, and all your playmates, pray,
And those lost dreams that our good poet knew.
Come forth, my Little Sister, come and play!*

THE DRYADS

A ONE-ACT LYRICAL DRAMA OF ANCIENT GREECE

SCENE: *A deep and mighty Forest near the Vale of Tempe in Thessaly.*

TIME: *Approaching the close of the Tenth Century, B. C., the day when through permission of the wood god, Pan, at the end of every hundred years, the Dryads are released from their tree boles.*

A syrinx is heard. Then a murmur, indistinct at first, but gradually growing louder and clearer, like a great wind in the forest. All at once, shapes, silvery green and golden brown, are made visible, flowing like light from the hoary trunks of the trees.

FIRST DRYAD

Again the cycle rounds its years!
Again, o'erhead and all around
The night that clasped my beauty clears —
My limbs are free, my heart unbound.

SECOND DRYAD

O beauty, mothered of the green
And gold that haunt the sacred wood,
Take heart once more and run between
The silence and the solitude.

A THIRD DRYAD (*far off*)

Come, where the moss spreads carpets cool:
The fern hangs fold on emerald fold!
Come, where the hyssop banks the pool
With heaven; poppies nod their gold.

A FOURTH DRYAD (*approaching*)

Bend down, O boughs! and blow, O leaves!
And, winds, come take us by the hair!
Come, dance with us, where nothing grieves,
And with our wild hearts laugh at care!

FIRST DRYAD

As in a pool a pebble drops,
The clouds let down a little breeze,
And round the forest's circled tops
A ripple runs like breaking seas.

SECOND DRYAD

Oh, let it lead us, guide us, to
Our heart's desire beyond the sun, —
The Dreams, Faun-like, who still pursue
Our love, and ever round us run.

The Dreams, the Fauns, whom no man sees,
Only our eyes that watch behind
The bark, and through investing trees
Behold what haunts the wildwood's mind. . . .

THIRD DRYAD (*far away*)

Hark, how the cascade calls us there!
Wild-tossing locks of foam and moss —
Come, let us trail with hers our hair,
And trip her Naiad limbs across!

FOURTH DRYAD

Now arm in arm, around and round,
In wildflower cirques of pearl and blue,
Dance down the wind, without a sound,
And wake the new buds, breaking through.

Then, face to heaven, light as air,
Where every leaf winks wet its eye
Of dew, that starred Dawn's chilly hair,
Come flit in glimmering beauty by.

*The forms of the Dryads, who have been circling
and murmuring together to the chanting of
the four voices, suddenly arrest their move-
ments, and lean listening intently to a
sound that seems to rise up from under-
ground.*

FIFTH DRYAD

But, oh, what calls! what cry intrudes?
Whose voice is that? what sound of moan?

VOICE FROM UNDERGROUND

It is the deep roots of the woods
Crying for freedom like your own.

FIFTH DRYAD

Where is god Pan?

MANY DRYADS (*near and far away*)

O Pan! Pan! Pan!

VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

Make free our forms, whose twisted hold
Has grasped through many a century's space
The mighty forest, dark and old.

MANY VOICES (*windily, far and near*)

Pan! Pan! god Pan!

FIFTH DRYAD (*beseechingly*)

Oh, set these free!

Unloose from them the knotted dark!
From coiling shapes that none can see,
Like us, who crouch behind the bark!

*A syrinx is heard, bird-like, approaching
through the trees. Then a voice, seem-
ingly that of Pan, speaks.*

But all your praying is in vain!
Again on you the ancient doom
Falls, and your beauty once again
Must grow into a living tomb.

The bird-like syrinx is heard again, pensively, plaintively, gradually dying away in the distance. The glimmering forms of the Dryads remain frozen, as it were, beside the trunks of their respective trees. Unutterably sad the voice that first announced triumphantly their freedom now pierces the silence of the listening forest.

FIRST DRYAD

Around my form again I feel
The solid darkness close and creep! —
Farewell! farewell! till Pan unseal
The night again wherein we sleep.

As they are slowly withdrawn into the enveloping trunks of the trees, many voices are heard, lyrically; finally blending more and more whisperingly with the movements of the branches and the leaves, until, more and more indistinct, the leafy sound, rising and falling at regular intervals, is hardly distinguishable from the wind in the woods.

A VOICE

If you hearken and heed in the forest,
When the wind blows soft above,
You may hear, in the bending branches,
Our wild hearts beat with love,
And our airy bodies move.

ECHO

With lights of green and gold,
And fragrance manifold,
They mark the moss and mold.

ANOTHER VOICE

As we glimmer and glide and glimmer,
Dim-limbed of the wind and sun,
In the woods an old enchantment,
Like a drowsy dream, is spun,
'A dream that 's never done.

ECHO

'And tender as the blue
Of wildflowers wet with dew
Their soft eyes gaze at you.

A FAR-OFF VOICE

And, oh, when the fountains call us
Through veils of the foam and moss,
How we dance to the cascade's music,
And trail like mist across,
With rainbowed hair atoss!

ECHO

How sweet, where waters flow,
And fern and wildflower grow,
To watch them come and go!

FIRST VOICE

But ever a sound of sorrow
Breaks in on our revery:
The sob of the roots of the forest,
That hold to heaven each tree. . . .
What now shall set them free? —

ECHO

Alas! if I but knew
A charm that would undo!
But lo! a prisoner too
Am I! am I!
A prisoner too, like you,
Until I die.

*Their voices fade away in a long-drawn sigh,
and the forest is slowly darkening when the
bushes are cautiously parted and two young
Fauns appear in the circle of trees, glim-
mering into dusk.*

FIRST FAUN

They laughed at me.

SECOND FAUN

They scoffed at me.
They cried me fool. They called me fey.

FIRST FAUN

But Pan has shut each in her tree,
And we are free to run and play.

SECOND FAUN

How old they are! — But we are young.

FIRST FAUN

No matter! we are wise as they.
And not so close of speech and tongue. —
Now, brother, tell me: Yesterday
What happened you beside this way.

SECOND FAUN

It was among these very woods,
When darkness closed the wild hills in,
And with a swiftness, that eludes,
The spider-life came forth to spin:
Between a mighty tree and rock,
Dim in a ray of moonlight thin,
I saw Pan sitting, wild of lock,
His huge hands resting on his chin,
Where crickets made a drowsy din.

His beard poured down a waterfall
Before him; and his moss-like hair
Rolled silence round him like a wall
Around a tower brown and bare:
His tree-like limbs, that spanned the stream,

His shoulders, like an eagle's lair,
Loomed, lichen-mottled: and the gleam
Of glowworms streamed into the air
From out the starlight of his stare.

His body bristled thick with thorns
And awns of wild-oats, like a hill;
And like the toiling of the Norms,
His strength, though quiet, was not still.
The twisted roots that were his feet,
From which the waters ran a rill,
Were made the temporary seat
Of voices wild, batrachian-shrill,
That all the darkness seemed to fill.

The fingers tangled in his beard
Were knotted like the boughs of trees;
And on them gaunt the owl appeared;
The nightingale made melodies:
And through the forest evermore
There went a droning as of bees —
The calling of Pan's heart, that poured
Protection on the least of these —
The forest-life that clasped his knees.

FIRST FAUN

'T is well. And I, too, yesterday
Was lucky. Think what I have seen!

SECOND FAUN

What was it? Come; no more delay!

FIRST FAUN

But in what favor *you* have been!
 In Pan's own presence: and have learned
 Of Godhead's self; no go-between!
 While I have watched, all undiscerned,
 A young Leimoniad.

SECOND FAUN

You mean
 The one you chased here o'er the green?

FIRST FAUN

The same. — Her breasts were tipped with
 coral:

Her mouth and cheeks were each a rose:
 Her hair was golden-green, like sorrel
 That into starry blossom glows.
 As some slim bough the south wind blows
 She swayed beside the bramble thicket,
 Light-tilted on her tiny toes,
 Held in her hand a shrilling cricket.

The grace of wind; the poise of dew;
 The wild alertness of a flower,
 Were in her limbs that glanced and blew
 Through blossoms like an April shower,
 That fills a rainbow-rounded hour.
 Before her danced a butterfly,
 Blue as the petal of a flower,
 Swayed by the import of her eye.

As some wild plant within it closes
All fragrance that its bloom reveals,
Her breathing held a sense of roses,
An attar such as rain unseals.
And with such swiftness as one feels
When breezes sweep one way the clover,
She showed the wind her twinkling heels
And tossing locks with bees a'-hover.

Not mine to tell you where she went,
Or how before my eyes she faded;
How for a moment there she bent
And from its bud a bloom unbraided;
Or how the forest pool she waded,
And from its ooze the lily lifted,
Then with a glance the young bird aided,
Who from its nest in fright had drifted.

SECOND FAUN

But, brother, say, did you not follow?

FIRST FAUN

Nay. Like a mist athwart the dawn
She gleamed an instant in the hollow,
Burned into beauty and was gone.

SECOND FAUN

Had it been I, as I'm a Faun!
I'd caught her hair.

FIRST FAUN

Nay; none might capture
That nymph, for whom each flower put on
Joy, and each leaf looked love and rapture.

SECOND FAUN

Look where the crocus and amaracus,
The cistus, cyclamen, and helichrys,
Wave their sweet fingers sleepily at us —

FIRST FAUN

As if they wished to fling a good-night kiss.

SECOND FAUN

Nay! nay! to point us where some young
Nymph sleeps —
But hark! who comes? — What is it runs and
leaps?

*The ferns and underbrush to the right of them
are violently agitated and a young Satyr
leaps out.*

SATYR

Brothers, have you beheld her? — Passed she
here? —
Far have I followed.

FIRST FAUN

No one passed this way.

SECOND FAUN

What was she like?

SATYR

The dreamy close of day,
With starlight in her eyes, and love and fear.

FIRST FAUN

Tell us about her. — Have you done her
wrong? —
And to what race of nymphs does she belong?

SATYR

As I lay on a rock to-day
And watched the sunset die away,
A wood mist took on azure form,
And gestured with a windy arm
For me to follow through the gray
Old forest to some place of charm,
A place all wild with foam and spray.

And there, within a murmuring dell,
There always seemed to lie a spell:
And, underneath a hollow stone,
A water-dæmon seemed to moan,
Condemned forever there to dwell

And sob in sorrow: wildly blown
Its foaming hair about me fell.

I raised the rock that held it bound,
And, lo, it changed into a sound,
A shape of music, viewless yet,
Breathing of fern and violet:
And from the sound a form unwound,
A silvery thing, that twinkled wet,
A rainbow winding her around.

She on my eyelids kissed me thrice,
And clasped me with white arms of ice;
And gazing on her, light as loam
My heart grew. — I would bear her home,
This Naiad creature with wild eyes,
Born of the flowers and the foam,
And make her mine in other wise.

But she like water swung and swayed;
Then like a ripple tripped the glade,
A Limnad, or a Naiad thing,
That fluttered now a rainbow wing,
And now a prism'd shine and shade,
Weaving a cirque, a bubble ring,
Wherein my satyr heart was laid.

And then, as softly still as moss
Greening some drowsy rock across,
She stole beside me: and I felt
Her mouth on mine; her breath, that smelt

Of fern and flower. — At a loss
I leapt to seize. . . . She seemed to melt
And vanish with wild locks atoss.

And in her place — I rubbed my eyes —
I saw a trailing wood mist rise;
An azure form, an irised gray,
That seemed to motion me the way
That I must follow. In this wise
I hither came. Now tell me pray,
Passed she this way, in some disguise?

FIRST FAUN

Naught saw I save a topaz gleam
Flit through these glades, a sunset beam.

SATYR

'T was she I know. But whither fled?

FIRST FAUN

I know not. Haply overhead,
Where, yonder, falls the mountain stream.

SATYR

Farewell. — Mayhap 't is as you said.
There I perhaps may find my dream.

*He departs, leaping lightly into the shadows.
The Fauns seat themselves at the foot of
a gigantic oak tree, and stare steadily in
the direction which the Satyr has taken.*

*Dusk deepens. A pipe is heard, far off
in the forest; a lyric note — like that of
a nightingale.*

FIRST FAUN

What does the flute say, brother?

SECOND FAUN

Dream, dream, dream.

FIRST FAUN

Tell me the dream it sings to you. I hear,
But I am tired and only wish to sleep.

SECOND FAUN

Sleep then; and let me murmur it in your ear.
Now I remember: it was but last year
This thing befell me. Still the old trees keep
A record of that happiness, I deem,
And this dim moment brings its beauty near.

FIRST FAUN

Tell me of that lost happiness. Very dear
It must have been, since now it sings so sweet.
And brings the wildflowers crowding to your
feet.

SECOND FAUN

'T was in this selfsame forest,
When Spring walked here and dreamed,

And everywhere, in earth and air,
The God of Beauty gleamed:

'T was in this selfsame forest,
Lost in the oldtime hills,
When every rock the ladysmock
And crocus blossom frills:

'T was in this selfsame forest,
Beneath a flowering thorn,
I saw the side of a tree divide
And a dryad presence born.

A shape of emerald shadow,
The sunlight arrowed through,
Who left the print of her feet in mint
And windflowers wet with dew.

Her hair was corn-ripe amber,
And golden-long as moss,
And the woodland glanced into light and danced
Whenever she made it toss.

Her eyes were mountain azure,
Star-sapphired, ray on ray,
And wherever they fell a wildflower-bell
Leapt blue beside the way.

Her mouth, an apple-blossom.
Her tongue, a rosy bee;
And whenever she spoke a bird awoke
And a wing beat in the tree.

And I was fain to follow,
Forever and a day,
And make her mine as the eglantine
Makes its the heart of May.

And oft she turned with laughter,
And oft she tossed her head;
And I followed on till the day was gone,
And the sunset's rose burned red.

And still I followed after,
And still she fled afar,
Till eve was done and, one by one,
Night bloomed with star on star.

And then once more she beckoned,
And wild of heart drew near,
And I felt her breast to my bosom pressed,
And her wild-fern breath in ear.

And what to me she whispered,
And what my heart replied,
The wild, deep soul of the solitude
Dreamed, and the wind in the ancient wood
Into starry being sighed.

FIRST FAUN

Silence. The reticent stream makes not a
sound;
The forest sleeps and winds are hushed around.

Slowly the moon, like some bright Oread,
 breasts,
With pearl-white bosom bared, the vasty wood,
And a pale moment on the mountain rests,
Startled, astonished at the solitude.
Silence. A bird stirs in the nested leaves,
And the deep bosom of the forest heaves.

SECOND FAUN

Murmur. Conspiracies of tempest pass,
Swaying the forest as deer sweep the grass:
Æolian raiment rustles; and dim feet
Of darkness dance, anticipating dreams
That die before fulfilment; whispers meet
And syllabled voices of the hills and streams.
Murmur. The Night Wind passes. — Hark!
 again,
Far off, the caution of approaching rain.

*They stretch themselves at the foot of two
gigantic trees, and sleep. Silence, save for
that indefinable movement which is ever
perceptible in a forest no matter how wind-
less the night may be. It is as if invisible
and ministering forces were assembling,
above and below the earth, to perform cer-
tain duties, the fructifying and finishing of
fruit and flower and leaf. The moon has
risen and pours her pale light down on the
recumbent forms of the Fauns. All is*

mystery and moonlight and shadow. Dimly at first, and seemingly remote as lost antiquity, a voice is heard, murmurous with a mighty music, to which another voice, as remote and majestic, replies, making the forest-hush melodious with meaning.

AN ANCIENT OAK

I heard a voice in the forest
 When the world was thrilled with morn;
 And its sound was the sound of waking
 And vision a moment born:
 And it said to my heart: "Behold me! —
 But let thy Dryad beware:
 For I am she, the deity,
 Whose beauty wakes despair."
 And full in the dawn I saw her,
 As Actæon saw of old,
 The perilous virgin presence,
 With gaze of green and gold:
 As Actæon saw I saw her,
 White-limbed where the morning wells, —
 And the hound-like sense of that insolence
 Has silenced my soul with spells.

AN ANCIENT BEECH

I heard a voice in the forest
 When the earth was hushed with eve;
 And its sound was the sound of slumber
 And dreams that none perceive:

And it called to my soul: "Behold me! —
But let one look suffice;
For I am she, the divinity,
Whom none shall gaze on twice."
And I looked as looked Endymion,
And saw her shimmering there,
With limbs of pearl and mother-of-pearl,
A crescent in her hair:
As Endymion saw I saw her, —
Like the moon on Tempe's streams, —
And the light of her look and the joy I took
Have blinded my heart with dreams.

*With the hushing of the voices of the trees,
myriad insect sounds make themselves
audible, 'mid which is heard the fine, fibril
pipings of a syrinx; and suddenly, in a
whirl of creatures of the forest, Pan, blow-
ing fiercely on his pipes, dances down the
glade. The Fauns stir in their sleep; rub-
bing their eyes they leap to their feet and
follow after him. Scene closes.*

THE COMMON EARTH

I

SOUNDS of children at their play,
Laughter dropping young and clear
As dew from out the flowers of May:
Murmured songs and wings in flight,
When Summer takes with warmth the year:
Far off thunder, never near,
Dreamy with a strange delight,
Drowsy with a thrill of fear,
And the sound of rain at night —
All are pleasant to the ear. —
Then the wood-bird's plaintive call
Overhead at evenfall:
Insects singing in the weeds
When the dusk is blue and still,
And the full moon breasts the hill
Like a sylvan from her rill;
And the wind among the reeds
Whispers, and they stir and fill
Silence with a glimmering sound
As of spirit things around,
Twinkling mist-like o'er the meads,
Spilling earth with dewy beads:
Mellow music of the frog,
Where the night her elf-lights leads, —

Faeryland and dreams ajog
With their torches, drums and reeds,
Dancing over brook and bog:
Or where waters, bright with moon,
Sigh of sleep a faery tune,
Dreamy stir of boughs of June. —
These are pleasant to the ear,
Common ear;
Things the Earth's old heart holds dear.

II

The face of one we love near by,
And friendship's smile to which we cleave
Through life's long mutability,
Are pleasant to the eye. —
Gold-flickerings on an August eve
In one rose-cloud the day may leave,
In dominating majesty,
Constant in its inconstancy,
To hold the sunset and one star, —
A lamp a sylphid swings afar
In caverns dim of porphyry,
Or grottoes pale of airy pearl; —
How pleasant to the eye! —
Cloud-Alps whose battlements unfurl
Heat-lightnings; and along which fly
The colors of a quiet sky,
That lift the thought to things on high,
Beyond this world that we perceive;
And waken in the heart a sigh,

With a sweet yearning still to grieve; —
Colors in a quiet sky; —
Cascades falling, gleam in gleam,
Where the forest shadows dream,
And the wildflowers, eye to eye,
In the stream gaze slenderly:
Firefly glimmers, amber-green,
Over swards dim-elfed with dew, —
Links that torch the faery queen
On her bat-wing through the blue,
When the crescent moon hangs new; —
Or, upon a winter's night,
Glancing through a window-light,
Seen afar, the fire's red glow,
Elf-like dancing on the snow,
Leading back to long-ago: —
All are pleasant to the eye,
Common eye;
Things the old Earth holds us by.

III

Childhood's breath, divine with health,
And heavenly sweet as hydromel;
Cheeks, whose roses blush in stealth
And of the heart's young secret tell:
Rain-odors blown from fields of hay,
New-reaped and warm, at close of day:
And from the orchard, near the well,
Fruit-musk of ripeness full that fell,
With muffled thud, through heavy boughs;

And honeyed odors, sweet-asway,
Bee-clung and bruised, beside the way, —
These are pleasant to the smell:
And scents that sweeten an old house,
That hugs its garden to its heart,
And makes itself of it a part,
Inseparably; the ancient spouse
Of rose and pink and hollyhock,
And many a spicy-smelling stock,
Round which the moths in ermine dart
When twilight calls them forth, and eve's
First star looks trembling through the leaves,
And up the lane come slow the cows,
Tinkling a dim and mellow bell,
What time the wood-smoke tells of home,
And in the woods the leafy loam
Breathes of the autumn soon to come: —
These are pleasant to the smell,
Common smell,
Things that hold us like a spell.

IV

'A child's soft hair beneath the hand,
Through which the heart may understand
The innocence which means so much
To all we've longed for and have planned; —
The thoughts, the faery fancies, — all
That keeps our hearts in childhood's thrall,
Subservient to and glad of such.
A child's soft hair beneath the hand —
How pleasant to the touch,

And intimate with love's demand!
 Then water-lilies, plucked from cool
 Dark depths of some old woodland pool,
 Where all the shadows wild remain,
 Unmoving, dreaming steadily,
 As in dark eyes a mystery,
 Elusive with the beautiful:
 These are pleasant; and the rain
 On orchard blossoms, sweet a-strain,
 Through which, when Spring comes windily,
 One seems to feel he clasps her there,
 Beauty, the hoiden, wild as fair,
 Her rose-leaf lips on his again,
 While 'thwart his face blows wet her hair:—
 And then, when dusk has dewed the heat,
 The feel of grass beneath the feet,
 As when in childhood brown and bare
 Along the summer we did fare,
 Without a fear, without a care:—
 The feel of grass! — How young and sweet
 The feel of grass beneath the feet! —
 Ah, how pleasant to the touch,
 Common touch!
 Things of earth that help us much.

v

Water from a mountain spring
 Out of crystal bubbling:
 Wells, where wild the ferns are laced,
 And the mountain blossoms cling —

Ah, how pleasant to the taste!
Dew within a wildflower's throat,
Round whose bloom the wild bees sing,
Hummingbirds flash out and float:
Sweetness, in which may be traced
Spice of wildness, tang of clove,
Color even, interwove, —
These are pleasant to the taste.
Wine and pungence of the grape,
Crushed with purple on the lips;
And such sap as Summer sips
From a leaf-cup or a flower,
Or the berry that she strips,
Dewy at the morning hour,
From her briar-tangled bower;
These are pleasant to the lips:
Racy ripeness; drowsy drips;
Honey of the bag o' the bee;
And the cool acidity
Of the sorrel: tastes that teased
Childhood's palate; sweet and sour;
All that once our playtime pleased:
These are pleasant to the taste,
Common taste,
Things where earth its name hath traced.

VI

These are pleasures that to life
Bring no strife,
But content and quiet days,

In God's praise;
 Making here, in many ways,
 Something even
 That approaches near to Heaven:
 These be common to all life,
 Man and wife;
 Common to all human hearts, —
 Hearts, whose tastes are clean and sane:
 Simple joys, that still obtain;
 That comprise within their parts
 Nothing which life may disdain;
 Simple joys, and pleasures plain,
 Common to all human hearts,
 Souls that know no modern arts,
 Mad desires that vex the brain,
 Futile, volatile, and vain
 As the castles built in Spain,
 Kingdoms on eidolon charts. . . .
 Things that help the human heart, —
 Common heart, —
 And are an undying part
 Of the life that's clean and sane:
 Simple life and quiet heart —
 God be thanked that such remain!

A FAERY BURIAL

SCENE: *Midsummer Night; a wooded and moonlit hollow thro' which foams and falls a rocky and ferny stream.*

FIRST FAERY

BRING the firefly for to light
Lanterns of our funeral rite;
Swing their glimmer to and fro
So that Faeryland may know
That a faerymaid lies low
 As a flower;
One who tripped it but ago
Merrily, oh, merrily,
 Hour on hour,
In the moonlight's primrose glow,
On the hilltop, on the lea,
 In the hollow,
Light of heart as bird or bee:
Who no more on hill or shore
Now shall trip it merrily,
In the starlight and the moon
To the cricket's creaking tune.
 Faeries, follow!
 O-hey! O-hey!
 Elf and fay,
 Come away, come away!
Follow, faeries, follow!

SECOND FAERY

Bring the glowworm with its torch
 For to light our funeral march;
 Bring the beetle with his drone
 For to drowsily intone
 Pixy grief and pixy moan:
 From the thicket
 Bring the cricket,
 Who beneath a hollow stone
 Maketh sorrow all alone:
 Let him make for her a rhyme,
 To which all our thoughts shall chime,
 Sadly chime,
 In the hollow;
 While the flowers all keep time,
 Mournful time. —
 Faeries, follow!
 Eglantine,
 And Columbine,
 Troop in line!
 Follow, faeries, follow!

THIRD FAERY

Bring the harebell, hollow blue,
 Clappered with a bead of dew;
 Bring the wild-bean and the pea,
 Little bells of fragrancy,
 Let them ring a melody;
 Hang them o'er us
 On a web of witchery;

They her requiem shall be;
Let them swing there solemnly,
Solemnly;
Toll in chorus
Dirges for her lying here,
Lying here,
In the hollow;
Who no more shall lean her ear
To a flower; there to hear
Faery music, crystal clear
In its heart of honey-cheer.
Bear her now away from here
On a petal for her bier:
Faeries, follow!
Larkspur, Phlox,
From the rocks
Twinkle down with loosened locks! —
Follow, faeries, follow.

FOURTH FAERY

Close her tiny coffin up,
Fashioned from an acorn-cup;
Dig her grave where she was born
Underneath the elfin thorn. —
Ah, that fay should die forlorn!
Dawn should startle
Her: who stopped and stayed till morn
Gazing on a mortal-born
Youth, whose hair was gold as corn,
Who returned her love with scorn —

Foolish mortal!
 He, too, now shall die forlorn,
 Love forlorn. —
 Would that she had turned ere day
 From the hollow!
 Had the red cock, far away,
 Crowed to warn her, then a ray
 Had not pierced her heart, sweet fay!
 Cruel morning so to slay!
 Faeries, follow!
 Elf and sprite,
 Down the night,
 Follow, faeries, follow!

ALL FOUR FAERIES

Let the hornet and the bee
 Sent'nel her virginity:
 Let the wasp and dragonfly
 Guard the spot where she doth lie,
 Where the hollow waters sigh
 And the glimmering winds go by,
 Bearing wild the owlet's cry. —
 None must know where she doth lie,
 None must know that faeries die! —
 Leave no token
 Here to draw a human eye:
 None must know that faeries die. —
 Leave unbroken
 Cups of moss and ferns and flowers,
 Wilding flowers,
 In the hollow;

Naught must point to what was ours,
Faerymaid who once was ours. —
Leave her now to moon and showers,
That shall soon transmute her powers. . . .

Come away!

Faeries, follow!

Come away!

The east grows gray! —

Leave her here to sleep alway:

Come away! 't is break of day!

Follow, faeries, follow!

TWO FAERIES AND A FLOWER

SCENE: *A moonlit forest of early Spring.*

FIRST FAERY

HITHER, sister, lend an ear:
What is this which now I hear
In this wildflower, frail and white,
Glimmering in the April night:
Is 't a dream it yields unto? —
Or the kisses of the dew?

SECOND FAERY

You a Faery, and not know
What a flower thinks! — Ho! ho! —
That's the ecstasy it feels
At the beauty it reveals:
'T is the thought within its heart,
Of its buds and blooms a part.

FIRST FAERY

Sister, sweetheart, tell me now —
What is this within the bough?
Cautiously it feels its way
As if fearful to betray
Some old secret? — Is it mind,
Working in the darkness blind?

SECOND FAERY

Brother, you should know this thing:
'T is the sense of blossoming:
'T is the beauty there awaiting,
And within its self debating
When to push forth sap and scent,
And again be evident.

FIRST FAERY

Sister, tell me: Do you know
What is this that moves below
In the earth? — What gropes and feels
Like a blind-worm, mole at heels? —
Is 't an ant that digs its home,
Laboring under clay and loam?

SECOND FAERY

Brother, you should know this sound! —
'T is the seed beneath the ground;
Acorn splitting through its husk,
Busy in the under dusk,
Thrusting down its coil of root,
And up twisting green its shoot.

FIRST FAERY

Sister, here's a cobweb thing,
Fine as moonlight. Let us swing. —
Listen! — Are we near a nest? —
What was that I heard or guessed?

What keeps singing? — Can it be
Some wild bird I cannot see?

SECOND FAERY

Brother, you have ears and eyes,
Yet you are not over wise. —
What you hear now, — listen well, —
Is a bird within its shell
Taking form: beneath its wings
'T is its heart you hear that sings.

FIRST FAERY

Sister, see! there goes a snail:
On that fern it leaves a trail
Silver gray. — Come; get astride:
Down this cobweb let us slide. —
Tell me, sweetheart, is it true,
Mortals oft come here to woo?

SECOND FAERY

Brother, once, — oh, long ago! —
Here I saw them walking slow:
One a man and one a maid.
There was starlight in the glade.
Long I listened in the fern,
But of them could nothing learn.

FIRST FAERY

Did he kiss her? Did she sigh?
Or did they go silent by? —

Were their faces pale with bliss? —
Human love they say 's like this:
Very sweet and sad and strange,
Far beyond our faery range.

SECOND FAERY

You have said it: They seemed sad,
Happy too. A something had
Entered in their lives denied
To the faery-life that spied.
Oh, how greatly did my heart
Envy them love's human part!

FIRST FAERY

Since you saw those lovers you
Have become quite different too.

SECOND FAERY

Sad and wise? — It well may be:
'T is the soulless part in me,
That keeps crying night and day,
"Would that I were not a fay!"

FIRST FAERY

Do you love me?

SECOND FAERY

Ah, you know.

FIRST FAERY

When I kiss you thus and so,
Sweetheart, are you sad or glad?

SECOND FAERY

Very glad. — But *they* were sad.

FIRST FAERY

That 's because *they* 're mortal-born. . . .
Come away! Let 's dance till morn.

WOODS AND WATERS

I

On a Headland

WHITE sails and sunlight on a sapphire sea,
Whence, rank on rank, the battling billows come
In emerald onslaught, plume on flying plume,
Trampling the shore with epic ecstasy.
This is God's poem, that, with mystery
And marvel of music, strikes man's spirit dumb,
Addressing it, in voices of the foam,
With thoughts and dreams of immortality.
Long have I stood upon this rock, that brows
Old Ocean's azure, and within its deep
Beheld God's image, and divined such awe
As one, admitted to his Father's house,
Feels, when from innermost chambers to'ards
 him sweep
The solemn splendors of invested Law.

II

The Forest

Ghost-flower and mushroom, fungus many hued,
Dot dim mosaics under pine and birch,
That column huge this dim, mysterious church,

Aisled and clerestoried, which men call a wood.
 There! — Is 't the shadow of a dream pursued?
 Or deer that passes? — What is yonder smirch
 Against the sunlight? — Raven on its perch?
 Or cowléd doubt addressing solitude? —
 A brooklet, brown as Autumn, in its flow
 Murmurs a prayer, as pilgrims might at march;
 And when the wind, with sibilant silence shod,
 Lifts up its voice in organ worship, lo,
 Yon woodland vista, with its sunset arch,
 Seems a vast casement glorifying God.

III

The Mill-Stream

The cardinal-flower, in the sun's broad beam,
 With sudden scarlet takes you by surprise,
 Its fiery star arresting heart and eyes,
 Like some strange spell beside this forest stream.
 The wood around is shadowy as a dream
 Of witchcraft, filled with unrealities: —
 You 'd hardly start if from those ferns should
 rise

A satyr something with faun eyes agleam.
 And on the rocks the sound of drowsy foam
 Is like a voice of Legend, half asleep,
 Crooning a tale of vague antiquity;
 And with the sound you almost feel that some
 Strange thing will hap, — a hamadryad leap
 Between the boughs, Pan-hunted to the sea.

IV

The Old Saw-Mill

Brown as a cairngorm, rimmed with golden
woods,

The clear brook glasses in an oval pond,
Pouring confusion thence where great blooms
blond

The glimmering marge in weedy multitudes.
Here where its ruin o'er the tumult broods,
Moss-sunk and crumbling in a stony bond,
No more its toiling wheels and saw respond
To the swift water's urge whose sound intrudes.
Here in the night, among the rocks and slime,
So dark the stream, so lost in utter gloom,
One could imagine that this skeleton form
Still kept a memory of some perished crime,
And saw forever down its roaring flume
A wild face whirling in the rushing storm.

V

Swamp-Led

The old trees weep with mist; the pitcher-plant,
Thrusting its crimson blossom from a whorl
Of purple-veined cups, that drip and curl,
Leers like a lip in dreams of old romant.
And, like the hair of some drowned girl, aslant
The wild grass trails its darkness in a swirl
Of long lagoon, wherethro', a sorry pearl,
The aster glimmers, death's last ministrant.

You almost fear to tread the swollen moss,
 That shags the rocks and pads the humps of
 trees,

Lest, yawning suddenly, a pit of death
 Suck down the instant feet, to slide across
 A form of ooze, with hands of slime that seize,
 And, dragging slowly, clutch away the breath.

VI

The Swamp

Hummocks and hags of moss and writhen roots,
 Fantastic forms, — the twisted torture-tools
 Of demon Nature, — who, amid gaunt stools
 Of fungus, squats shrilling her insect flutes.
 Above, at dusk, the staring screech-owl hoots;
 The blue wisp wanders; and among dim pools
 The horn'd moon searches where the darkness
 drools

Toad-throated mockery that the distance mutes.
 The bladderwort and pitcher-flower bloat
 Strange blossoms here, fat-rooted in the ooze;
 And all the trees, that seem to await a sound,
 Lean stealthily over, watching yonder boat,
 Half-sunken there, fearful of what may use
 Its rotting oar when night comes, hushed, pro-
 found.

VII

The Place of Pools

Here, though bluff weeds their mauves and pur-
 ples flaunt,

And daylight spreads glad gold on grass and
moss,
Is something sinister, the soul's at loss
To understand or see as is its wont:
Morosely old, a something, grim and gaunt,
Stalks there invisible, as stalks across
A ruin of legend, with gray hair atoss,
Vague Superstition, making it his haunt.
Above the sombre pools the gypsy Fall
Leans, wild of look. . . . Is that a crimson
bough,
Staining the water? or a blur of blood?
That, as a mind a memory may recall,
The place reshapes within itself somehow,
Pointing a crime long buried in the flood.

VIII

Vespertime

The barberry reddens in the lanes; the vine
Hangs a red banner where the wood-brook rills;
The cricket in the dropping orchard shrills,
Piping the starry asters into line.
The hoarse crow calls, winging from pine to
pine,
That lift their columns on a hundred hills,
And sentinel the sea whose emerald stills
Its heart's unrest, drinking the sunset's wine.
Afar one sail, touched with the flame that flies,
Glimmers and fades; and in its place a mist
Puts forth an arm embracing sea and shore:

And over ocean, where the long light dies,
 The harvest-moon orbs in the amethyst,
 Like some huge pearl round in a shell's blue
 core.

IX

Flower Pageant

The orange and amber of the marigold,
 The terra-cottas of the zinnia flowers,
 With which the season every garden dowers,
 Light up their lamps of Autumn as of old.
 The salvia, flashing scarlet manifold,
 And aster, that its flame-like flowers showers,
 Seem bonfires builded to keep warm the Hours,
 Who huddle round them murmuring of the
 cold.
 Along the roads, in torques of gold, parades
 The Summer's pageant; every bloom a torch
 Borne in September's train, whose funeral goes
 With pomp of purple down these woodland
 glades,
 Where Melancholy sits beneath the larch
 Crumbling the crimson of the last late rose.

X

The Wind from the Sea

Mother of storm, all night it wailed and wept
 Outside the window; or, with wrath and roar,
 Beat with wild hands of terror at the door,

Till on the hearth the frightened fire leapt,
And from the sea a moaning answer swept,
As if the ghosts of all the dead it bore
Cried out in lamentation to the shore,
That with its crags and pines grim council kept.
But with the coming of the rose of dawn
Its clamor ceased; and, mid the flowers and
trees,
It sighing went; or, leaning, soft of tone
Whispered of beauty, till the soul was drawn,
As by a ghost in drowsy draperies,
Back, back to memories of the long-agone.

XI

Sea Lure

Deep down I see her on a coral throne,
Or in an emerald grotto, arched with foam,
Combing green tresses with a rainbow comb,
The kraken by her, watching, still as stone.
Oft have I seen her in the ocean's moan
Busy with shells beneath a nautilus dome;
Or scattering pearls to lure the fishes home,
A mermaid form no man shall make his own.
Now like a siren, on some island hoar,
Naked she sings of loves and lotus lands,
And men who hear leave sweethearts and their
wives;
And now, a witch, from some Utopian shore,
Beckoning, she calls, rich treasure in her hands,
And to the quest men blindly give their lives.

XII

Ocean Mists

All day the mists crept stealthily from sea, —
 A silent army of invading white,
 That planted glimmering banners on the height,
 And blotted out each rock and hill and tree:
 Far as the eye could see, mysteriously,
 Wild tents arose; it seemed that all the coasts
 Of all the world had sent their specter hosts
 To 'sieve the land which Autumn held in fee.
 The landscape, hanging a disconsolate head, —
 Tears and dejection in its attitude, —
 Dripped, mourning for the Summer that was
 gone;
 While through the garden, where the flowers
 lay dead,
 A phantom moved, of melancholy mood, —
 Trailing the ghost of beauty, dead at dawn.

XIII

A Forest Place

Like some sad room, devoted to the dead,
 Dim with the dust of love-begotten hours,
 Where dull decay sits, and gray memory lowers,
 And sorrow stands beside death's ancient bed:
 Where dark, above, the filmy form of dread
 Spins webs; and in a dusty corner cowers
 Love's fragrant dream, among forgotten flowers,
 With broken lute, and bowed unhappy head:

So seems the Year in this old forest place,
Among Fall's tarnished purples and torn golds:
The dedicated loveliness of woe
Brooding forever on Joy's perished face,
The happiness that passed, where none beholds,
With Youth and Spring into the Long-Ago.

*Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass.,
September, 1911.*

A PATH TO THE WOODS

Its friendship and its carelessness
Did lead me many a mile,
Through goat's-rue, with its dim caress,
And pink and pearl-white smile;
Through crowfoot, with its golden lure,
And promise of far things,
And sorrel with its glance demure
And wide-eyed wonderings.

It led me with its innocence,
As childhood leads the wise,
With elbows here of tattered fence,
And blue of wildflower eyes;
With whispers low of leafy speech,
And brook-sweet utterance;
With bird-like words of oak and beech,
And whistlings clear as Pan's.

It led me with its childlike charm,
As candor leads desire,
Now with a clasp of blossomy arm,
A butterfly kiss of fire;
Now with a toss of tousled gold,
A barefoot sound of green,
A breath of musk, of mossy mold,
With vague allurements keen.

It led me with remembered things
Into an oldtime vale,
Peopled with faery glimmerings,
And flower-like fancies pale;
Where fungous forms stood, gold and gray,
Each in its mushroom gown,
And, roofed with red, glimpsed far away,
A little toadstool town.

It led me with an idle ease,
A vagabond look and air,
A sense of ragged arms and knees
In weeds grown everywhere;
It led me, as a gypsy leads,
To dingles no one knows,
With beauty burred with thorny seeds,
And tangled wild with rose.

It led me as simplicity
Leads age and its demands,
With bee-beat of its ecstasy,
And berry-stained touch of hands;
With round revealments, puff-ball white,
Through rents of weedy brown,
And petaled movements of delight
In roseleaf limb and gown.

It led me on and on and on,
Beyond the Far Away,
Into a world long dead and gone, —
The world of Yesterday:

A faery world of memory,
Old with its hills and streams,
Wherein the child I used to be
Still wanders with his dreams.

THE DREAMS OF SUMMER

Now drowsy Summer takes the world
And rocks it in her arms,
A poppy flower, it seems, soft curled
Upon her breast that warms.
Among the fields with Indolence,
In gypsy gown of ragged gold,
She walks; or by some tangled fence
Sits with the Dreams of old.

Upstarting when, in rebel red,
The Sunset pitches camp
On uplands of the heaven o'erhead,
She lights her signal lamp,
The moon, she swings so all may see
The twilight way which she must take,
Putting to bed the bird and bee,
And life in field and brake.

When Night leads from the folded hills
Its clan of gypsy dreams,
Upon her cricket-flute she shrills,
And scatters glowworm gleams;
Then slips the moon-moth from its weed
On pearl-orbed wings of seal and tan,
And calls the wild Stealth forth to feed
That lives in fear of man.

She drives the warm winds through the trees,
And thuds the earth with fruit;
The tumbled ripeness, no one sees,
Smells bruised beneath the foot:
She herds the sky's cloud-fleeces white
On acres of the star-flowered blue,
And sows the dusk with firefly-light,
And plants it with the dew.

Dim in the East, when stars grow wan,
On housewife knees she kneels,
And blows the hearthfire ash of dawn
Which red her face reveals:
And then down-lying, morning's rose
Stuck in a cloud of tawny locks,
She dozes in the garden close
Among the hollyhocks.

Falls fast asleep; then, half aware,
Beside the sleepy stream,
Stoops, and her hot face in its hair
Startles her like a dream:
And pale with fear she turns away,
And to her hounds, the wood-winds, calls,
Who, mad with haste, set all asway,
Where swift her shadow falls.

And from the hills on lightning feet
Her whippers-in, the thunders, race,
While through a veil of rain and heat
Earth shows a frightened face:

Till deep within the cloud-walled West
 Eve lights a witch's windowpane,
Where shapes, in gold and scarlet dressed,
 Show where she dreams again.

HARVESTING

I

IT'S — Hey, for the dell, oh! when harvest is
yellow,
And orchards hang mellow and appled each
tree:
It's — Leave the ripe acres, the reapers and
rakers,
And all the haymakers and wander with me,
O girl, like a poppy full blown for the bee!
 With cheeks like brown berries,
 And lips like wild cherries,
And beauty, I swear it, far sweeter to see
Than Summer in blossom, deep Summer in
blossom,
With clover-sweet bosom and heart of a bee. —
It's — Hey, for the dell, oh! and tryst by the
tree.

II

And what will they think, oh! when sunset is
pink, oh!
And little stars wink, oh! like buds in the blue?
When into the gloaming we two go a-roaming,
Like birds that are homing, when fireflies are
few,

O girl, like a wildrose full blown for the dew:
 With hair like the twilight's,
 And eyes like dusk's high lights,
And body a garden that Love wanders through,
A garden of roses, moon-lilies and roses,
Whose beauty uncloses to kiss of the dew. —
Ah, what will they think, oh! those stars in the
 blue?

SABBATH

I

'ALL is repose,
Where swaths of summer, laid in hay-sweet
rows,
Make musk the fields through which the path-
way goes
Unto a woodland-wall where cedars dream,
And roses shred their petals, one by one:
Where, slumbrous silver, leaps a little stream,
Making a murmurous glimmer in the sun,
And on a log, a slender streak of gray
Against the noon, a small green heron stands,
Moveless as meditation. — Far away
Dreams seem to camp among the meadow-
lands. —
Rest rules the day.

II

Night comes to woo,
Mid heaps of clovered fragrance, cool with dew,
And fields of flowers a gateway leads into,
Under the shadow of great chestnut trees
Where moonlight waits, a presence, that
awakes

Cricket and katydid and sleeping breeze,
And shakes the attar from the wildrose
brakes:

And now the darkness opens many an eye
Of firefly gold; and gowns herself in white,
Far-following veils of mist; and with a sigh,
Voluptuous-drawn, resigns her to delight. —
Love rules the night.

DESERTED

THE old house leans upon a tree
Like some old man upon a staff:
The night wind in its ancient porch
Sounds like a hollow laugh.

The heaven is wrapped in flying clouds,
As grandeur cloaks itself in gray:
The starlight flitting in and out,
Glints like a lanthorn ray.

The dark is full of whispers. Now
A fox-hound howls: and, through the night,
Like some old ghost from out its grave,
The moon comes, misty white.

THE WOOD STREAM

As night drew on, around the quiet stream
The wildflower heads leaned closer, and the
trees
Muttered a little, as if half in dream;
And through the wood, trailing sweet robes, a
breeze, —
Like some dim elfin gathering perfume, —
Faltered a moment ere it sank in gloom.

Then all was still — except that one small stone
Protested, whimpering, in the water's way;
Petulant, resistant, where the cascade shone,
Wrapping its tumult in a gown of spray,
Like some pale mother who would put to rest
Her child, a starbeam brooching her bright
breast.

More careful of the nest upon its arm,
That hugged the wild-bird, seemed each bush
and tree:
And in its heart, securing it from harm,
Each wildflower seemed to clasp more close its
bee:
And even Earth with more protection seemed
To hide the things that in her bosom dreamed.

Save for the stream, to which the hush' gave
 heed,
And little winds that sighed and, whispering,
 rose,
And donned their rustling robes with infant
 speed,
Tiptoe, regardful of the wood's repose,
The night was still. — And then, as if aware
That all was ready, radiance filled the air.

Godiva-like, the moon rode into sight,
Cautious, yet confident that no one sees;
The naked moon, astonishing the night,
Brightening the thoroughfares of all the trees:
Holding her course unfaltering and sure,
Knowing herself as beautiful as pure.

WORM AND FLY

UNSEEN the lizard, in reptilian night,
Evolves the hole wherein are placed its eggs,
Small, yolky oblongs of membraneous white,
Seed-like that put forth legs.

Beneath the stone, that lies where long it fell,
The pale grub sleeps until the Summer sings,
Then, blindly groping, splits its locust shell
And whirls rejoicing wings.

Upon the oak bough, swelling with the sap,
The gray-green gall rounds, like a wart, its
 sphere,
Wherein the woodfly's whining sting shall tap,
And bore its thin way clear.

I stand and wonder, pausing mid the trees,
And question what they purpose — worm and
 fly;
Unbeautiful; and made, it seems, to tease,
And weary ear and eye.

Does Nature blunder into forms? Does she
Count these as true expressions, — fly and
 worm?

And Man? — perhaps her one mistake is he —
Slow-toiling out his term.

Hag-lights and fox-fire and the wisp that flies —
Are they not parts too of great Nature's
scheme? —

'T is flame that shows where buried treasure
lies,

'And night, that makes it gleam.

THE OLD BAYOU

THE rosy egret, Sunset,
Wings up the moss-gray skies;
And creeping under clouds, the Dusk,
A burning beetle, dies.
Round cypress, oak, and willow
A raucous music cries,
'And from the water, dark beneath,
The mist's white shadows rise.
'And glimmering down the bayou,
With starlight-twinkling eyes,
The Twilight oars her blue canoe
Pale-prowed with fireflies.
Her owlet call the Darkness
Utters in vague surmise;
Then with a sibilant voice afar
The bayou Hush replies.
Now Night the cricket hinges
Of her old doorway tries,
'And stealing through the House of Dreams
Sleep to the silence sighs.
'Wide to the dark one window
She flings, and from it flies
'A moth—the round, white, wandering
Moon,
'Whose ghostly image lies

Upon the bayou's bosom
In strangely shimmering wise —
'A phantom barque with a phantom maid,
Who a phantom paddle plies.

BUTTERFLIES

FREEBOOTERS of the sunlight, blue and black,
Glimmering with gold you go your velvet ways
From flower to flower, from weed to weed, and
back,

Demanding toll of all the honeyed days,
Nature accommodating all your needs,
As once she did when with unaltered face
She fed the worm as now the fly she feeds.

The worm! how long since you forgot the worm
Unsightly that you were? the chrysalis
Your life endured; the dark, prenatal term
Of your existence, wherein naught of bliss
Or beauty was. — Now out of night returned,
Pinioned and plumed, your life is one long kiss
On Summer's languid lips for which you
yearned.

This was your hope in darkness, where your
dreams
Were all of wings and rainbows, manifold,
Which transformation touched and changed to
gleams,
Materializing their ethereal gold,
That burst your prison house and rose to range
With joy, forgetting all the life of old;
The new accepted as if nothing strange.

Go your glad ways of fragrance and of light,
 Following the dream, forevermore that lures,
 Beyond the shadow of immortal night
 That holds the soul: the dream, through which
 endures

Hope which hath led the world for centuries, —
 The hope within the heart which still assures
 The soul of many immortalities.

DRAGONFLIES

You, who put off the water-worm, to rise,
Reborn, with wings; who change, without ado,
Your larval bodies to invade our skies,
What Merlin magic disenchanted you,
And made you beautiful for mortal eyes?

Shuttles of summer, where the lilies sway
Their languid leaves and sleepy pods and
 flowers,
Weaving your colored threads into the day,
Knitting with light the tapestry of hours,
You come and go in needle-like array.

Now on a blade of grass, or pod, as still
As some thin shred of heaven, motionless,
A point, an azure streak, you poise, until
You seem a figment Summer would express
But fails through utter indolence of will.

Then suddenly, as if the air had news,
'And flashed intelligence of faery things,
You vibrate into motion, instant hues,
Searching the sunlight with diaphanous wings,
Gathering together many filmy clues.

Clues, that the subject mind, in part, divines,
Invisible but evidenced through these: —
The mote, that goldens down the sun's long lines,
The web, that trails its silver to the breeze,
And the slow musk some fragile flower untwines.

Could we but follow! and the threads unwind,
Haply through them again we might perceive
That Land of Faery, youth left far behind,
Lost in the wonder-world of Make-Believe,
Where Childhood dwells and Happiness-of-Mind.

And, undelayed, far, far beyond this field
And quiet water, on the dream-road trail,
Come on that realm of fancy, soul-concealed,
Where we should find, as in the faery tale,
The cap through which all Elfland is revealed.

A WILDFLOWER

How may my art proclaim thee?
Or half thy grace express?
What word is there to name thee
And all thy loveliness?
Thou, who beside me swayest,
Within this woodland old,
Too much to me thou sayest
With thy dim blue and gold.

Beside this mossed rock growing,
Where wild bees dream and drone,
Thy delicate shadow throwing
Upon the gray-green stone;
Of something thou remindest,
Some far thing of the soul,
A look when love was kindest,
A touch that did console.

The bird above may know it,
So pensively it sings,
But never priest or poet, —
The thought that with thee springs.
Part of the heart's elation
Is what thou dost express,
That shrinks from ostentation,
And merely loveliness.

Ah, could my words define it,
Or lend that thought a name,
Then all men might divine it,
And thou wert sure of fame.
But words speak nothing clearly;
'And men who read may say —
Oh, 't was a wildflower merely
He found beside the way.

THE GHOST FLOWER

(THE INDIAN PIPE)

WHAT freak of faery, fancy of the night,
Compelled you hither, drowsy with the dew?
Taking my heart with weirdness, like the flight
Of moth or owlet through the noonday blue,
O flower of phantoms, — slender as a light
That flits at haunted casements, pale of hue, —
 A finger white
Lifting, mysterious, on the startled view.

Decay and dampness mothered you, while death
Sat by and glowered under threatening skies,
Breathing you full of his autumnal breath,
Staring you white with winter of his eyes:
O type of everything which perisheth,
Corruption hidden 'neath a fair disguise,
 Whose Beauty saith,
“Behold a symbol for the worldly wise.”

O flower of death, so like, yet not a flower!
O form of fungus, are you kin to those?
Did God conceive you in some lonely hour,
Uncertain yet of what He did propose?
A half-formed thought, abandoned; without
 dower

Of fragrance; whence grew out the perfect rose
 Of Eden's bower, —
 Whose counterpart in every garden grows.

A semblance merely, flung forgotten here,
 Eidolon-like, disclaimed of all your kin,
 Pointing a phantom finger at the Year,
 Or with a twisted hand, as white as Sin,
 Clutching at silence, who a hollow ear
 Leans to the earth on which the rain beats thin,
 While shapes of fear
 And shadows wander, dream-wise, out and in.

Dreams from the world of gnomes, where mys-
 teries dwell,
 You conjure forth: — I seem to see them stand,
 Fantastic round you: up and down the dell
 Their vague enchantments move, pale hand in
 hand. —

Would that I too such magic could compel,
 And, so admitted of Night's Erl-King band,
 Could break the spell
 That bars the gateway into Elfinland.

AUTUMN STORM

TOPPING the hills the oaks,
Black on the sunset's fire,
Draw, with terrific strokes,
Gates as it were of Tyre,
Burning; while, like a page
Out of some tragedy,
Heaven grows dark with rage,
Pregnant with things to be.

Out of the North the Wind
Gallops with all his hordes,
Hun-like, and gaunt and blind,
Swooping the Earth with swords:
Night, on her tower of cloud,
Lets her wild beacon flare;
Then, through the darkness loud,
Arrows rain everywhere.

Wrapped in their mantles wide,
Cloaks of the mist that stream,
Onward the Hours ride,
Forward with never a gleam:
On through the forest, on,
Over wild hill and plain,
All the long night till dawn
Trample the troops of rain.

“ I HEAR THE WOODLANDS CALLING ”

I HEAR the woodlands calling, and their red is
like the blare
Of trumpets in the air,
Where rebel Autumn plants her tents and
crowns her gypsy hair.

I hear her beauty calling glad, with crimson
and with gold,
As oft it called of old;
And I must forth and greet her there and clasp
her close and hold.

'As yesterday, again to-day, my heart will run
to her,
The gypsy wanderer,
Through scarlet of the berry-pod and purple of
the burr.

The vines that vision forth her cheeks shall tell
me where she lies,
Soft gazing at the skies;
And I will steal upon her dreams and look into
her eyes.

The sumach that repeats her lips shall tell me
where she smiles,

Who still my heart beguiles,
And I will speak her face to face and lounge
with her for miles.

A riot and a tangle there, a blur of gold and
gray ;

She surely went this way —
Or, so it seems, the maples cry, the cloudy asters
say.

Oh, I must up and strike the trail, that often
I have gone,

At sunset and at dawn,
Where all the beauty of the world puts all her
splendor on.

I hear her bugles on the hills ; I see her banners
blowing,

And all her campfires glowing, —
The campfires of her dreams, — and I — I must
be up and going.

DOLOROUS NIGHT

ALL night long I heard it raining,
And the trees
To the flowers, still remaining,
Kept complaining
Without cease.
All night long I heard a weeping
As of grief,
While the autumn wind kept sweeping
Branch and leaf.

All the night I heard a crying. —
Was it rain? —
Or a sorrow trailing, flying,
Dimly sighing
At my pane?
All the night I heard a beating
As of wings,
And a voice that kept repeating
Many things.

At my window, that was shuttered,
Once the wind
Tapped; — or was 't a leaf that fluttered,
Darkly muttered,
At my blind? —

Was it Autumn? — Or, unsheathing
Black his blade,
Death? who stood there darkly breathing
Where Night swayed.

Was 't the ghost of some departed
Love, long lost?
Driven like the leaves that darted,
Broken-hearted,
Tempest-tossed? —
All its wild hair dripped November,
Dark and wet. . . .
What it wailed the woods remember —
I forget.

THE CALL OF THE HEART

OH, my heart is on the moorland, on the old
land, on the poor land,
Where it hears the heather calling and the gorse
shake with the bee!
Oh, it's there I would be lying, with the clouds
above me flying,
And blue beyond the blackthorn tops a peep of
purple sea.

Oh, my heart is on the moorland, on the old
land, on the shore land,
Where the gypsy-bands of dreams pitch camp,
the dark-eyed Romany!
Oh, it's there I would be dreaming, with the
sunset o'er me streaming,
With her beside my campfire there whose voice
still calls to me.

With her, the light-foot maiden, with her eyes
so vision-laden,
That little sister to the flowers, and cousin to the
bee:
Oh, would that we were going against the hill-
wind's blowing
To meet the playmates that she knew, that child
of Faëry.

Oh, would that we were sitting beneath the
wild-fowl's flitting,
Her dark eyes looking into mine as stars look in
the sea,
While, dim as autumn weather, and sweet as
scents of heather,
Our campfire trails its smoke of dreams like
mists along the lea.

Oh, heart, there on the moorland, the old land,
and the poor land!
You 're breaking for the gypsy love you never-
more shall see:
The little light-foot maiden, the girl all blossom-
laden,
Departed with her people and the dreams that
used to be.

OLDTOWN

HARNESS up the old horse;
 Harness up the shay:
We are bound for Oldtown
 Many miles away.
If arrived at middle night,
 In the wintry weather,
We shall find the old folks
 Waiting up together.

There the heart is home, dear;
 There the rooms are wide;
Rafters bright with firelight;
 Summer-sweet inside.
There, though backs be bowed with years,
 Forms are straight in seeming;
And beneath the locks of age
 Youth's deep eyes are gleaming.

There the dooryards blossom
 With the oldtime flowers;
Pansy, pink and mignonette,
 Fair as childhood's hours.
Lamps of lost Aladdin days,
 There the morning-glories
Hang; and roses grow the gold
 Of old faery stories.

There the songs we loved once,
And the tales we told,
Haunt the hearths and chambers
With the words of old.
There, though lips be sad and thin,
Worn with toil the fingers,
Kindness keeps them beautiful
With a love that lingers.

Harness up the old horse;
Harness up the shay:
We must get to Oldtown
Ere the close of day.
If the road be long, be long,
And the Inns — not any,
In the town is rest, my dear,
And good friends a many.

THE OLD PLACE

SASSAFRAS grows at its gate, and veins
Of lichen mottle its stones with stains;
And there, where its porch hangs low in view,
High on its beams the swallows brood:
Its garden blossoms, all poppy strewed,
With oldtime flowers of every hue.

The old spring calls where the hollow drips
And still invites with its mossy lips,
Lullabyed to by the sleepy pines,
Within whose whisper the woodchuck steals,
And along whose twilight the fox reveals
An instant's glimmer when noonday shines.

It is a place that I dream of oft:
I see the light in its log-built loft;
The wasps that plaster their cells of clay;
The weaving spider; and, bubble-blue,
The sky, that sweeps with its swallow through
Its open window, high-heaped with hay.

The martins circle its roof in flocks,
And twitter its chimneyed martin-box;
The redbird builds in the trumpet-vine,

A living crimson that flecks the trees,
That shade the shed where the borer-bees
Whine at their holes in the planks of pine.

I dream of the way that takes me where
The creek in the woods has made a stair,
A rock-stair, roofed with the boughs of beech;
And I see the pool where the minnow shines,
And dragonflies flash their jewelled lines,
And pale pond-lilies loll just in reach.

And barefoot there, in torn straw-hat,
His dog beside him, where oft he sat,
I see a boy in the glimmering day
Dropping an idle line: may be
Floating a boat of the bark of a tree —
A boy, who has never gone away.

The boy, who haunts that oldtime place,
With his sun-tanned feet and freckled face;
The lad, who follows at dusk the cows,
As oft and oft in the days gone by;
The boy, brown-haired, who once was I,
Who lives in dreams of that oldtime house.

THE PATH TO YESTERDAY

THERE 's a path that leads to Yesterday — you
 know it;
A rambling path of flowers and perfume:
You remember how the wild grapes overgrew it
To the house upon the hilltop deep in bloom.

There 's a path that leads to Yesterday through
 flowers,
Where the veery is a voice of wandering song;
Where the cricket snaps its faery whip for
 hours,
And a barefoot boy goes whistling all day long.

There 's a path that leads to Yesterday through
 dingles,
Mossed and ferny, where the wood pool is an
 eye,
And the sunbeam is a twinkle there that mingles
With the gladness of a girl that dances by.

There 's a path that leads to Yesterday,
 a-glimmer
With the pearl and purple footsteps of the Dusk;
Where the first star leaps and flashes, like a
 swimmer,

On the violet verge of twilight washed with
musk.

There's a path that leads to Yesterday that's
haunted

With the shadows of old memories of bliss,
And the ghosts of loves that roamed there once,
who counted

Every moment by a heart-beat or a kiss.

Hark — the path that leads to Yesterday is
calling! —

Don't you hear it? how it calls through many
things!

Through its roses, like the memories now falling,
And the dream-like nestward fluttering of wings.

On the path that leads to Yesterday we've
started! —

Hear it calling with its many whippoorwills! —
Like the voices of old Happiness departed, —
Through the darkness, where the moon rests on
the hills.

AGE

Dust and fatigue; and down Life's long hot
road

Age and his oxen, groaning with their load,
Pass creakingly: the ever-urging goad
Of want compelling to what unknown end?
What though the fields around be ploughed and
sowed;

The orchards burdened till they break and bend,
Meagre for him the harvest God will send,
And what he reaps haply he may not spend.

What eyes are sadder than the eyes of Age!
That have but labor for their heritage,
And loneliness and loss for toil's long wage;
That by the rushlight Faith still try to read
Their Book of Patience, dimly, page by page,
But find no comfort there that helps their need,
But weariness ever; nothing sweet to feed
Heart's hope upon, or any love to lead.

I often think that if God could behold
The sadness here of all Earth's poor and old,
He would not sit so calm as we are told:
If He could hear the souls that pray in vain,

The hearts that perish, crying in the cold,
And of bereavement all the wailing train,
His hand would hush the archangelic strain,
And Heaven sit bowed with pity for Earth's
pain.

DROUTH

BESIDE the dried-up streams the Summer walks
In ragged gray and tattered green and gold,
Dragging her slattern feet from wood to wold,
O'er every field that white a pathway chalks:
And evermore unto herself she talks,
In insect accents, strident, manifold,
Stinging the heat with weariness untold,
Her scrawny voice dry as the wayside stalks.
Beside the pool, where late she leaned and saw
Her lily bosom bared to lure the bee,
She leans again, beholding but a pod,
A withered disc, near which the crow's harsh
 caw
Seems but the echo of the mockery
In her own heart, that laughs at Man and God.

BESIDE THE ROAD

Who has not walked with loneliness,
And leaned upon the arm of grief,
Along the road of Heart's Distress,
Mourning that joy is brief?

The paths appointed us to take
Are not the ways that we would choose;
The guide-post reading "Duty's Sake"
Is one we cannot lose.

But they, who kneel awhile and pray,
Or muse with Nature upon God,
May find, beside the lonely way,
The faery goldenrod

Of hope, whose light makes bright the road,
And beautifies the lonely hours,
And turns the sorrow of our load
To thoughts, like shining flowers.

THE HAIL STORM

ALONG the hill's huge back,
Above the crouching terror of the plain,
Tempest, imperial, crowned with blazing black,
Trails far the thunderous purple of his train,
Tattered with fringes of the streaming rain.

Vast forces seem at council: genie shapes
And elementals changing, form on form;
Now from the swarm one awful Deev escapes,
And with a lightning gesture lifts its arm,
Shouting a word of storm.

And all the earth sits cowering: not a sound:
The forest's shoulders shudder, swing and sway:
Then, like some monster thing that quests
 around,
The Afrit wind leaps on the driven day,
And wrapped in rain and hail rides his re-
sistless way.

CHAOS AND ORDER

SHADOWS; and outposts of the rebel Night,
And muttered whisperings of conspiracy:
Deep in the west a flicker of ominous light,
As if a torch had signaled suddenly;
Involving heaven and earth in anarchy:
Then, high above the world, vast wings in flight
And trumpet-thunder of Night's empery. —
Chaos and Night, — form upon demon form, —
Riding the exultation of the storm.

Glimmer; and rumors of confederate Dawn:
Aerial tumult as of sylphid feet:
Far ranks of radiance, on the peaks withdrawn,
Confronting Darkness, who, in wild retreat,
Flies from the leveled glory, fiery beat
Of swords about a golden gonfalon,
And sapphire shields, and spears of blinding
heat. —
Light, and its ordered cohorts, ray on ray,
And the fierce phalanx of resistless Day.

THE GRAY LAND

THE crawfish builds its oozy chimneys here
 Of pallid clay;
The shadowy wood around is sad and sere;
 The sky is gray:
The mossy waters wearily creep
Dim through a land that seems asleep,
Or lost in old remembering deep
 Of some forgotten day.

The ovals of the acorns, split with rain,
 That sprout and spread,
Splash mud and moss with many a sinister
 stain,
 Faint streaks of red:
No sound upon the hush intrudes
Except the drip of wet, that broods
Like some old crime upon the woods,
 And holds them grim with dread.

SILK O' THE WEED

WHERE, under boughs of willow-gray,
By banks the blades began to pierce,
And leaflets pricked up pearly ears
To hear the things birds had to say:

I saw her standing, reticent
As Love that fears to be denied,
Shy, wildflower-faced and wildflower-eyed,
Spring, 'mid the pods the wind had rent:

Spring, in her robe of cloud and sun,
Wafting, with lips of redbud blush,
Into the air's attentive hush,
Assurance of the love begun:

White kisses for the trees and grass,
They streamed in promise everywhere,
And with them, bright with blowing hair,
A silken breath, I saw her pass.

THE PLOUGHMAN

THE broken soil, made damp with rain,
Smells good along the bramble lane.
Broad in the afternoon the fields,
Conscious of every seed they hold,
Seem thinking of the harvest-yields,
That soon will turn their brown to gold.

The coultured earth, the furrowed loam,
Dreams of the coming Harvest-Home:
And, dreaming, breathes of unborn hay,
Of briar and daisy, wheat and weed,
That shall bedeck it on that day
When men shall come and give it heed.

And he who guides the plunging plough
Across the soil's dark surface now,
What dream is his if any dream? —
Not one that aims at loveliness,
But plenty — like a golden stream —
To make his need and toil far less.

His toil and need! that circumvent
The soul, for which the dream was meant,
That lifts the man above the brute,
And frees from bonds of circumstance: —
But it is toil that gives us fruit,
And need is not a thing of chance.

DUSK AND THE WHIPPOORWILLS

THE wet gold of the rainy dusk
Died over woods and hills,
When through the Maytime's deeps of musk
Cried clear the whippoorwills.

One called afar; and one, loud-heard,
Answered quite near at hand:
Each seemed the utterance of a word
My heart could understand.

'A word of wonder and of dream
That held me when a child;
With charm investing every stream,
And every woodland wild.

That led me, most mysteriously,
Down haunted forest ways,
With magic of wild melody,
Back to the old hill-days:

Unto a porch, o'ergrown with rose,
Where still, with wondering eyes,
My childhood smiles and round it glows
The dream that never dies.

THE TEMPEST

LIKE soldiers, silent in the last redoubt,
The wildwoods waited as the storm drew out
Its cloudy cohorts with a mighty shout.

As men, who face destruction, overhead
I heard wild voices of the rain that said, —
“It is the forest-people! Strike them dead!”

Then followed tossings of tempestuous hair,
And movements of huge bodies everywhere,
And protestations, as of wild despair.

A moment's silence; then upon the world,
The charioteers of Tempest, — Winds, — were
hurled,
And Thunder's bellowing banner blew unfurled.

An oak, the tower of two centuries,
Set its gigantic shoulders to the breeze,
And roared down, ruining, on enormous knees.

Then overhead terrific trumpets blared:
The sky swooped downward with a sword that
glared,
And the long ranks of rain rushed, hurricane-
haired,
Charging the world with spears that nothing
spared.

TWO BIRDS

BIRDS

RISING in lyric rings,
There is a bird that sings, —
 “ Never, heart, never ! ”
Meaning, — From higher things
Never restrain thy wings ;
 Mounting forever,
 Dare and endeavor.

Gazing with jewelled eyes,
There is a bird replies,
 “ Sweetest, love, sweetest ! ”
Meaning, — What life denies
Love, who keeps pure and wise,
 That is completest,
 Holds what is fleetest.

Old as the heart are they,
Birds of the every day,
 Older than sorrow. —
Oh, may they sing alway
Down in the hearts that pray,
 Helping care borrow
 Hope of to-morrow.

IN THE DEEP FOREST

IN the deep forest when the lightning played,
Pallid and frail a wilding flower swayed,
Lifting its blossom from the streaming sod,
Trembling and fearful, like a child dismayed,
Who in the darkness has forgotten God.

In the deep forest, in the thunder's roll,
Face to pale face I met with my own soul;
And in its eyes were trouble and alarm,
Like that which held the heaven from pole to
pole,
And doubt of God above the night and storm.

In the deep forest, when the tempest passed,
The flower smiled unbroken of the blast;
And in the forest, as the day drew on,
Hand in pale hand, with sure eyes upward cast,
My soul and I stood confident of dawn.

PURSUIT

WHERE the slender stream runs rippling through
the woods,
Like a child who sings and dances to a song,
Towards a wildrose lure that evermore eludes,
What has followed, all noon long,
The murmur of a throng, —
Faint voices of the flowers that call in count-
less multitudes? —
Ah, what, but that dear love of old that still
is sweet and strong!

Where the shadowy stream trips whispering on
the rocks,
Like a spirit weaving magic in a dell,
Towards a music, at the heart that calls and
knocks,
What has tried to read or spell
Every leafy miracle,
That Nature writes within her book of wonders
she unlocks? —
Ah, what, but dear desires of old and dreams
that still compel!

Where the little stream slips downward to the
pool,
Like a joy into a life that shuts it round,

Where the grasses crown its quiet, deep and
cool,

What has caught the soul and bound

With a glimmer and a sound

And charmed it in a place apart that lights
make wonderful? —

Ah, what, but oldtime memories that here again
are found!

AFTER DEATH

THE forest stirred ; and then a bird
Sang ; and its song enspelled
The silence like some magic word
By which the heart 's compelled.

Among the woods, with interludes,
Deep-hidden in the green,
It sang to little sisterhoods
Of wildflowers dimly seen.

It seemed a flute, a faery flute,
Of one whom love compels,
Who pleads, Faun-like, his wildwood suit
In plaintive syllables.

And I, who heard its golden word,
Remembered once again
How long ago I 'd heard the bird
When life knew less of pain.

How then its note seemed less remote ;
And, in mysterious reach,
Though farther than a dream may float,
It with my soul held speech.

I understood. And through the wood
Its song went like a gleam,
Taking with love the solitude,
The human heart with dream.

It passed away with its wild lay:
And years have gone since then: —
I heard the bird again to-day
Within the selfsame glen.

In like event it came and went
With golden melody:
And, mother, oh, the things it meant
To the sad heart in me!

LIGHT

THE golden chrysalis of dawn
Breaks through its heavenly husk,
And winged with rose floats up and on
Piercing with flame the dusk.

Out of what darkness daybreak brings
Its testament of gold,
Inscribed with elemental things
That God hath never told.

Ah, Heaven! how good it is to live,
One with abounding day!
To be no longer fugitive
On Life's down-darkening way!

But, part and portion of the light,
To rise again re-born;
Beyond the shadow and the night,
Anointed of the Morn.

THE MOTHER

My little boy, who used to run
With glad hair blowing in the sun,
 Where runs he now?
 Where runs he now? —
In fairer fields than these, that blow
The withered blooms of long-ago,
That soon shall whiten with the snow
 As does my brow;
 As does my brow.

My little boy, the sweet of tongue,
Who leapt and laughed, and joyed and sung,
 Where sings he now?
 Where sings he now? —
In some bright place where children meet,
And lullabies of love repeat,
That break my heart's remembering beat
 With tears somehow;
 With tears somehow.

My little boy, who used to play
With happy eyes the livelong day,
 Where plays he now?
 Where plays he now? —

With fairer playthings there than those
That broken in their box repose,
As in my breast the hopes, God knows,
 O'er which I bow;
 O'er which I bow.

My little boy, who sat to hear
The wonder tales to him so dear,
 Where harks he now?
 Where harks he now? —
Haply in that fair world he knew
Of faery where all dreams come true
As here on earth they never do,
 Alas! somehow;
 Alas! somehow.

OLD "BUD" RILEY

*"Little Boy! — Halloo! halloo!
Can't you hear me calling you? —
Little Boy that Used to Be,
Come in here and play with me!"*
— "BUD" RILEY.

OVER the rail-fence of the years,
That climbs and crumbles between our lands,
Old "Bud" Riley, I stretch my hands
Full of my love and all that endears,
As the boy's young hands that once you knew,
Filled with unfaltering faith in you,
And love and laughter and smiles and tears.
The same old love that once you knew
When you and I went wandering through
Song's flowery fields, with never a frown,
And whistled our sweetheart, freckled and
brown,
Our country Muse, in homespun gown,
Who smiled on you and on me again,
As we tuned our pipes in the sun and rain,
Far from the crowd and the deafening town,
Out in the woods where the world is sane,
Out in the air of the open plain,

High on God's hills that His streams run
down —

Old "Bud" Riley, her heart was yours,
Is . . . though my love for her endures;
That little sweetheart, who, long, oh, long,
Has kept you a boy in the Land o' Song.

THEY SAY

(*To G.*)

THEY say that beauty withers;
They tell me flowers die;
That all the world's unreal,
And dreams, like days, go by:
They say that joy is mortal,
And nothing here is sure:
They all are lies, for, in your eyes,
I find that these endure.

They tell me glory passes,
That life is but a breath;
That happiness goes like the rose,
And love is slain of death:
They say that hope shall perish,
That nothing shall arrive:
I scorn the whole, for, in your soul,
I see how these survive.

CHARACTER AND EPISODE

FIREARMS

CHARACTERS: MRS. HOUSTON

GEORGIANA, *her daughter*

A FEDERAL LIEUTENANT

UNCLE MOTE, *a former slave of the
Houstons*

TIME: 1864

SCENE: *Entrance hall of Houston House in the State of Kentucky. Large doorway, center, opening on a pillared verandah, visible in part from hall through large window to left of door. Colonial stairway to right, a doorway back and beyond stairway leading to dining-room, etc. Another doorway, left, leading to drawing-room. As the curtain rises enter from drawing-room Mrs. Houston, Georgiana, and Uncle Mote, all three very much agitated; the old negro gesticulating and explaining vehemently:*

MOTE:

Yass 'um; Miss' Sally, dey 's dun fotched
'um all —

Tuh de las' hoss; an' ebery pig and keow —
Dey neber lef' us one ob all dat herd.

Ut 's a-gwine to break dis here ole nigger's
heart:

Ut 's almos' broke ut now, indeed ut has.

Ole Bess wuz de las' — de las' keow; she 's de
las' —

De las' ob twenty head. — Hit ain't no use!

But Ah c'u'd swaar an' swaar, an' jus' cut
 loose
 An', an' — kill a pa'cel o' Yankeemen; Ah
 c'u'd;
 If Ah jus' had a gun! — Gimme a gun, Miss
 Sally!
 Gimme a gun, er pistul — anythin' —
 An' — an' — Ah 'ull show 'um.

MRS. HOUSTON (*greatly distressed*):

Cows and horses gone!

Oh, what shall we do, Georgiana, what shall
 we do?

GEORGIANA (*desperately*):

I wish there were a gun about the place
 I'd bushwhack them — at least I'd get re-
 venge
 On one or two. A pistol 'd do.

MOTE (*eagerly*):

Yass 'um. Dat 's hit!

GEORGIANA:

They're bad as Sherman's men. Insulting
 hounds! —
 Robbers of women!

MRS. HOUSTON:

Thieves! hateful thieves and bandits! —
 Georgiana,

What shall we do now? Not a horse to drive
Or cow to milk! — All gone you say, Mote?
— gone?

MOTE (*with tears in his voice*):

Yass 'um, Miss' Sally, nary a one wuz lef'.

GEORGIANA (*more desperately than before*):

I wish I were a man! Oh to be a man!

To face these cowards that make war on
women!

*Military footsteps are heard on the verandah,
and the jingle of accoutrements. Old Mote
hurries to the window, peers out cautiously,
and then hurries back to Mrs. Houston and
Georgiana, who have remained in the back-
ground, near the stairway, whither they
fled at the sound of soldiers' approach.*

MOTE (*huskily*):

Dey's dar, Miss' Sally; an' de Cap'un's wid
'um. —

Yuh'd better hide yuhself. No tellin' now
Whut's hup. De Cap'un-man is wid 'um.

GEORGIANA (*despairingly*):

More shame! disgrace! — Oh, God! were I
a man!

MRS. HOUSTON (*weepingly*):

Another outrage! Not a day goes by
But that some new affront or insult's offered.

A voice commanding "Halt!" is heard outside the door. The footsteps cease with a clatter of arms. A peremptory knock is given the door. The two women stand waiting in attitudes of expectation and defiance, old Mote behind them. No notice is taken of the first knock. It is repeated more vigorously, and again ignored.

MRS. HOUSTON (*breathlessly*):

What can they want now! oh, what can they want?

GEORGIANA (*still desperately*):

To be a man! to be a man right now!

Armed with some sort of weapon. — I would
give

My soul. . . .

The door is flung violently open and a Lieutenant, with a squad of Federal soldiers in soiled uniforms, is discovered in the doorway. The Lieutenant is a man of about five and twenty, of an assured military bearing, and a handsome manner. Saluting he advances unsmilingly towards the two ladies, his soldiers filling the doorway.

LIEUTENANT (*courteously*):

I might have knocked again.

GEORGIANA (*scornfully*):

And why?

You could not enter here except by force.

You overwhelm us with your courtesies.

MRS. HOUSTON (*very rapidly*):

'T is not enough that you have robbed us, sir,

But you must march your ruffians to our door,

And through our house perhaps. Is't not
sufficient

That you have stripped our barns and pas-
tures of

The last of all our herds? Needs must you
now

Add outrage unto outrage; insult to injury?

Why have you come here? and are twenty men

Required for the arresting of two women?

This must be Yankee bravery.

LIEUTENANT (*courteously*):

Pardon, Madam!

GEORGIANA (*interrupting him furiously*):

Pardon indeed! — When thieves and thugs
win pardon

For deeds like yours, honor will be a name,

And honesty a by-word. Why are you here?

And back of you these bristling bayonets?

Are we then spies? and would you hang us
now?

Or loot the house and burn it afterwards,
As Sherman does in Georgia? What would
you here?

LIEUTENANT (*quietly, half smilingly*):

I was about to tell you when I entered.
No outrage is intended, and no insult.
I have received my orders from Headquarters
To search out firearms in this rebel district.
And disinfect it, as it were, of danger.
I'll to the point, however: Weapons, firearms,
Whatever arms you have, or great or small,
Must be delivered up.

GEORGIANA (*scornfully*):

And, pray sir, why?
We are but women. Two against an army.
You seem to think that we are dangerous.

LIEUTENANT (*calmly*):

You are notorious rebels. This is war.
The country all about us here is hostile.
Our sentinels are ambushed in the night.
We have lost many men through such
guerillas.
Therefore the Government has issued orders:
"Where any are suspect their homes be
searched
And weapons seized, and they, when they are
men,
Imprisoned." — It is known that you have
housed

Confederates lately. And I have commands
To search your house unless you willingly
Give up all firearms that you have concealed. —

This I regret. But I obey my orders.

MRS. HOUSTON (*plaintively*):

Have we not had indignities enough
This year from you invaders? Grief, distress
Of mind and body too in death and loss.
My son slain there at Gettysburg: my husband
Wounded, — in prison: then our property
Even to our last cow confiscated. — Now
You would invade our home.

LIEUTENANT:

'T is hard. But such is war.

GEORGIANA (*defiantly*):

War? — Yes! — But must you level war on
women?

If we had arms we might protect ourselves.

But we have none, only our hands, — and
hearts,

That build a bulwark 'gainst you. Were I a
man

I would wipe out this insult with a sword,

Or die in trying to. Even now, had I a
weapon,

I would resist you. But we have no arms.

LIEUTENANT (*firmly, but courteously*):

So much the better since you are for war.

Yet I must search the house to prove it true.

Beckons to the corporal at the door, who, with several men, enters the hall, saluting the Lieutenant, and stands awaiting orders.

MRS. HOUSTON (*in tears*):

We 're only women. We can not resist.

Insult us as you please, or slay us here.

Might makes for right. We 're helpless to
withstand

The many that are back of you. Indignities

We have grown used to, as one may become

Accustomed to diseases when prolonged. —

This man will search our house, you heard,
Georgiana?

GEORGIANA (*impatiently*):

I heard him, mother. (*To the Lieutenant*):

Will you take my word

We have no firearms here, concealed or un-
concealed?

LIEUTENANT (*suavely*):

I would not *doubt* your word, but I must see.

GEORGIANA (*with sarcasm*):

Why not proclaim me liar and be done?

Your very words have put a doubt on truth. —

Well, sir, since you insist, I'll fetch what
firearms,

The only ones I know of, we may have.

They may be useful to you. As for us —

They're ancient implements we do not need;

Therefore 't is folly to keep them. — I will
fetch them

If you'll permit me, and will order these

(Indicating the corporal and his men)

To quit the house. I will deliver all

That I can find, and with them your dismissal.

LIEUTENANT:

I ask no more. 'T is all that I require.

And I shall thank you, madam, and remove

The cause of this contention.

GEORGIANA (*scornfully*):

You are kind.

*(To old Mote who has been hesitating
in the background during this col-
loquy):*

Come with me, Mote. I need a little assist-
ance.

*(To Lieutenant, as she is about to
ascend the stairway respectfully fol-
lowed by the old darkey):*

Give me your word of honor as a man

And officer that you will quit this house

And with you all these raiders.

LIEUTENANT (*smiling*):

If the arms, —

All that you have, — are here delivered me,
 I pledge myself as officer and gentleman
 Immediately to remove from you the cause
 Of your disturbance.

GEORGIANA (*ironically*):

You are kind indeed!

(*To Mrs. Houston*):

Now, mother, you must calm yourself.
 You've heard
 Him name himself a gentleman. No harm
 Will come to any woman from a man,
 Even a Yankee, who's a gentleman.
 (*Exit with Mote up stairway.*)

MRS. HOUSTON (*bewildered*):

That we have firearms in the house is more
 Than I can understand. Who brought them
 here?
 Georgiana says they're here, and she must
 know.
 But 't is bewildering. I knew of none.

LIEUTENANT (*affably*):

Believe me, madam, I am very sorry
 That we have so distressed you. I would
 rather
 Be friends than enemies with Houston House,
 Famed for its hospitality throughout the
 State.

But these are war times; and in such, you
know,
Unfriendliness is breeder of suspicion,
And all suspects are subject to intrusion.

MRS. HOUSTON:

But, sir, we have not entertained a Southern
soldier

For months. We have not, to my certain
knowledge,

A firearm on the place. It is our Cause,
I fear, that's our offence, and your excuse
For this intrusion. Georgiana now,

Unless I am mistaken, will discover
Nothing that you demand. A young girl's
pride

In that which she holds sacred, which she'd
keep

From desecration, has devised a ruse.

But then she *may have* at some time discovered,

There in the attic, gun or old horse-pistol,
Useless and harmless now. We had a flint-
lock

And powder-horn, both relics of old days, —

'T was said they once belonged to Daniel
Boone, —

Hung up there o'er the doorway to that room
Upon those antlers, but they disappeared
Some months ago and with them a young
slave.

Search in your army; you may find them
there

With him, our runaway. — We are not now
What once we were. The war has taken much,
And will take all, perhaps, before it end.

LIEUTENANT (*sympathetically*):

War is not kind to any. Least of all
To women, who must stay at home and brood.
War is not kind to women's hearts, dear lady.
Men glory in war, and to them all the
glory. . . .

The mothers and the sweethearts have to bear
The heavier burden — sorrow and despair.
They sit or busy themselves at home and wait
For tidings of their loved ones: battles fought,
Or battles to be fought. Anxiety
Sits with them or goes at their side forever.
The pathos of it! In the bivouac
Or battle men know nothing at all of this.
The eyes of danger lure them on to deeds
And death perhaps; and deprivations only
Turn their male thoughts to home and wife
and sweetheart,
And comforts that they miss. But at the
bugle
Their hearts are fire again with dreams of
battle,
And victory, bright in a cloud of banners,
And smoke of cannon, glittering ranks of
steel,

Waving them on to glory, or destruction. . . .
War is not kind, war is not kind to women.
Why have I spoken words like these to you?—
Perhaps because I have a mother and sister.—
But here 's your daughter.

*(Enter Georgiana on the stairway,
followed by Mote, both of them
fairly loaded down with a miscel-
laneous collection of hearth uten-
sils: such as andirons, fire-tongs,
ash-shovels, poker, etc.)*

GEORGIANA *(advancing rapidly and defiantly,
with flushed face and flashing eyes, clash-
ing her armful of iron and brass down
at the feet of the Lieutenant):*

Here are your firearms!

There! take them all away. We have no
others. —

Now quit our house. —

*(Old Mote advances chuckling and
deposits his armful carefully on top
of Georgiana's.)*

MOTE *(grinning):*

An' dar 's de rest un 'um.

LIEUTENANT *(astonished; then reddening with
confusion at the smiles of his soldiers):*

What's this? — your firearms, madam? —
True! —

*(Recovering himself, he continues
with seeming seriousness):*

They might prove deadly weapons in desperate hands.

MRS. HOUSTON *(who has begun to like the young Lieutenant since her tête-à-tête with him a moment ago):*

Why, Georgiana! child, how could you?

GEORGIANA *(still defiant):*

Well!

He said he wanted them, and there they are.
They are the only firearms that we have.
Now let him *take* them, *all* of them away,
And *himself* too. — All we desire is peace.

LIEUTENANT *(smiling, mockery and admiration in his face):*

Indeed! an iron argument for peace, dear lady. —

But, pray you, now retain your arms. 'And let

Peace be declared between us.

(Turning to his amused squad):

Attention. Face.

Salute the ladies. Right about. March.

(Exit bowing.)

MRS. HOUSTON *(forlornly; while old Mote, exploding with laughter, retires by doorway, center):*

Well, well, my dear, however could you do it?
And he *so kind*.

GEORGIANA (*surprised at her mother's tone*):

So kind? — And do you call it kindness
To force your way, with arms, into our house,
And search out reasons to confirm suspicions?
I call it outrage! Never call it kindness. —

(*A little mollified*):

I hope we've seen the last of him and all
Who wear his hateful uniform. — Oh dear!

MRS. HOUSTON (*in a gentle voice*):

He had his orders, Georgiana, dear.

You must not blame him too much. War's
at fault.

GEORGIANA (*suddenly despondent*):

I do not blame him, mother. He *was* nice.

But that he should come prying here awoke
A rage in me I can not understand.

If it had been another man, why, I —

Would not have cared at all. But he aroused
An angry opposition here in me

I can not well explain. I'd rather have died
Than let him search the house. — Oh, I am
tired

Of this long war. — When will it end? oh,
when!

The grief, the heartbreak of it all! the wait-
ing,

The weary waiting and the lack of loving. —
 Mother, he, too, is young; may have a sister,
 A sweetheart, maybe. And *he* may be killed,
 Next week, *to-night*. — Oh, mother, war 's so
 cruel. —

I am unhappy, mother, so unhappy.

MRS. HOUSTON (*taking her soothingly into her arms*):

There, there, my child! my little Georgiana!
 Have patience yet awhile. We must be brave.
 And trust in God. All will come right with
 time.

GEORGIANA (*sighing*):

He had kind eyes; and when he smiled I
 thought

He looked like brother. Had he come to us
 In any way but this, I could have — liked
 him.

But he is gone now, never to return.
 War is so cruel, mother, Love unkind.

CURTAIN

A CRYING IN THE NIGHT

PERSONS: A SICK GIRL
A GIRL FRIEND

SCENE: *A poorly but neatly furnished cottage bedroom, adjoining and opening into a kitchen.*

SICK GIRL:

It's in the kitchen. Don't you hear it crying?

GIRL FRIEND:

There's nothing there but trouble of the flue
With wind and rain.

SICK GIRL:

You know, when it was dying
It cried like that.—What shall I, can I do?—

GIRL FRIEND:

You poor, poor thing! there, there.

SICK GIRL:

I saw the fire
Was low, and put *it* . . . underneath the
coal;
And as it burned its cry rose high and
higher.—
Tell me?—Can imperfection have a soul?

An embryo, no human thing could love,
That must associate itself with shame! —
Are you quite sure there's nothing in the
stove? —

Ah, God! ah, God! for what am I to blame?

GIRL FRIEND:

Keep still; and try to think of that no more.
You will go mad if you keep on like this.

SICK GIRL (*listening intently*):

Now! don't you hear it crying at the door? —
Surely you must. — How horrible it is! —
To think it suffers there! — But you — you
know

How, so unthinking, and how, unprepared
For all, I've suffered. It was like a blow.
I should have been advised, and never dared
To face my mother.

GIRL FRIEND (*positively*):

Why, you should have shared
Your trouble with her.

SICK GIRL:

Never, never that!
To have her know? That would have ended
all.

But how I've suffered! — Smiling I have
sat, —

Smiling, yet dreadful of what would befall:
Fearful of every movement; as I went

Studying concealment; she suspecting naught.
God help me now to keep her ignorant
Of this my crime, that blackened all my
thought

For months, till it was done. — But let it
be. —

You are the one who understood somehow,
You are the one who has befriended me. . . .
But, listen!—don't you hear *it* crying now?—

GIRL FRIEND:

Lie quiet. 'T is the wind in some wild
crack. . . .

I know your mother. — That she 'd be away
These two bad days now! When does she
come back?

SICK GIRL:

I fear to-morrow; or, perhaps, next day.
Could we devise some plan to make her
stay? —

GIRL FRIEND:

The sooner she returns the better.

SICK GIRL:

Nay! —

Oh, had my father lived this had not been!
How hard life is! how miserable and hard!—
When father died I was not seventeen,
And from that time it seems my life was
marred.

I had to go to work. — Then brother died. —
 It seems all things combined to make me bad.
 I lost my place. How was I to decide?
 We had to live. — No work was to be had.
 There was but *one* thing left: my hands were
 tied;

And I was sold, like any slave: nor knew
 Who in the end would pay the reckoning.
 There was no other thing for me to do.
 I was so ignorant of everything.
 This way seemed easy. God would give no
 sign.

And there was mother who was ailing much,
 And if I lost her, too, what fate were mine!
 The wonder is that God permitted such. . . .
 But that's a thing Life often wonders at —
 God's huge indifference, and disregard
 Of all distress; the misery, leaving scarred,
 Or stained, the soul, that gropes in utter
 night:

Ah, if the soul had but a little light! —
 There came no sign. My faith brought nothing in.

We could not live on prayer, when by our
 hearth

Starvation sat, gaunt knuckled, hand on chin,
 Staring the soul dead. What was virtue
 worth

Before that stare, that mixed it with the
 earth?

Something to barter in the House of Sin,

Of little value, and just left to rot,
Whether 't is sold, or whether it is not.

GIRL FRIEND:

You must not talk like that. — 'T will injure you.

SICK GIRL:

And does it matter? — Shall I live? — For what?

GIRL FRIEND:

Your mother! — When she comes what will you do?

SICK GIRL (*with determination and conviction*):

Oh, when she comes I must be out and up.

GIRL FRIEND:

Have in the doctor.

SICK GIRL:

That would not be safe.
He would ask questions. —

GIRL FRIEND:

Well, then. Drink this cup
Of tea: 't will help you.

SICK GIRL (*suddenly starting up, a look of inexpressible fear on her face*):

Hark! — the little waif

Is crying there again! — Oh, you *must*
hear! —

You *hear* but say you *don't*.

GIRL FRIEND (*shuddering*):

You make me creep.

It's just perhaps a singing in your ear
The tea would make.

SICK GIRL (*sobbing*):

Will it always weep,

And never cease, from year to haunted year?

GIRL FRIEND (*going cautiously to the kitchen door; listening; and then returning to the Sick Girl's side*):

There's nothing there, I tell you, but your
fear. —

Be quiet now and try to go to sleep.

SICK GIRL (*gazing wildly about the room*):

I can not sleep. And yet not for myself

Am I afraid. You know what I believe:

The Bible there upon that under-shelf

Damns me forever. Not for *that* I grieve —

But that the *Thing* had life which I thought
dead!

That it had life, and was so slain by me,

That makes the crying here, here in my head,

And in my heart the piercing agony.

GIRL FRIEND:

I think, perhaps, I'll have the doctor in.

SICK GIRL:

Not you! — And have him know? — Put that thought by!

You'd have the whole town yelping of my sin.
Think of my mother! — Ah! — I'd rather die.

GIRL FRIEND:

Then I must go.

SICK GIRL:

And leave me here with it!

GIRL FRIEND:

Yes; I must go.

SICK GIRL:

And would you leave me so? —

When I'm afraid the door there where you sit, —

If you should go, will open very slow
And *it* will enter, with its blackened face,
All accusation, and its eyes aglow
With God's damnation.

GIRL FRIEND (*concealing her own terror under a nervous smile*):

There is not a trace

Of sense in all this horror! — If I stay
You'll have to *talk* less.

SICK GIRL:

That's my girl-friend Grace!
How kind you are. But close the kitchen
door,
And shut the voice out. — If I could but
pray,
Then it might hush its crying; take away
This terror too down deep in my heart's core.

GIRL FRIEND:

You're hard on your poor self. If you could
sleep!

SICK GIRL:

I can not sleep, I can not sleep to-night!
That crying there. If you would only keep
The door locked fast, and light another light.

GIRL FRIEND (*goes into the kitchen, returns
with another lighted lamp*):

There now. Don't trouble. It is closed once
more. (*Closing door.*)
I've brought the kitchen lamp along.

SICK GIRL:

That's right. —
And did you hear it crying as before?

GIRL FRIEND:

Naught heard I save the water in a pan
Simmering and steaming. Now I'll *lock* the
door.

(*Goes to the door and locks it care-
fully.*)

SICK GIRL (*with a sigh of relief*):

To me *you* are far braver than a man.

(*Listening intently for a minute or two.*)

It's stopped its wailing. (*Brightening up.*)

When my mother comes

To-morrow morning I must be about.

GIRL FRIEND:

You'll stay in bed.

SICK GIRL:

Lie here and bite my thumbs? —

No; I'll be up. And better, too, no doubt.

GIRL FRIEND:

You'll kill yourself.

SICK GIRL (*with pensive pathos*):

There is no other way.

I have to pay — that's all that I regret.

It is the woman always has to pay.

The man can sin: his sin entails no debt. —

(*After a long pause*):

But what I did I did deliberately

For money for my mother, who has fought

Want all her life! — That clears me, don't
you see?

(*With conviction*):

And if *she* never knows — why give 't a
thought? —

*(She lifts herself, listening again.
Smiles wanly as if satisfied with
the stillness, and sighs):*

Now prop my pillow up, and smooth the
sheet:

I feel so drowsy. — Ah, the hush is deep!
It's good as music; but to me more sweet
Than any sound. — And, oh, how I shall
sleep!

THE WOMAN ON THE ROAD

PERSONS: A WOMAN, *with a Child in her arms*

A LITTLE BOY

A MAN

SCENE: A Country Road near a deep and hilly wood.

THE MAN (*overtaking the Woman, who looks worn and tired*):

That's a good load now for a weary woman!
The babe's enough, but the big bag beside! —
It is too much.

THE WOMAN (*wearily, looking at him and speaking with impatience*):

What would you have me do, man? —
They who have money can afford to ride.
It seems to me I am no longer human. —
What time is it?

THE MAN (*with a kindly smile*):

Not long till eventide. —
Your boy looks worn out, too.

THE WOMAN (*fiercely, addressing, as it were, the malign cause of it all*):

No wonder! Walking
Since seven to-day, and little rest between,
'And less of food. But I'm too tired for
talking.

THE MAN (*softly*):

That you are tired is easy to be seen.

THE WOMAN (*somewhat mollified and setting down bundle*):

But what one don't see is the heavy aching
Here. (*Laying hand on heart.*) While I
walk it does n't bother so.

The rocking keeps the baby too from waking.
Perhaps you are a father, and you know.

THE MAN (*quietly smiling*):

I wish I knew. — Your children are quite
taking. . . .

And where's *their* father?

THE WOMAN (*dejectedly*):

Dead a year ago.

Killed by a train — a freight, where he was
braking.

THE MAN (*quickly*):

And did n't the railroad pay? —

THE WOMAN (*indignantly*):

Pay? — Carelessness

They proved it was. And all our savings
went.

And then — and then — the baby came.

THE MAN (*sympathizingly*):

I guess

What followed: — hunger. — (*Indignantly*):

They not mulet a cent!

THE WOMAN (*wearily*):

We've walked and begged our way for many
a mile.

It's Shepherdstown that we are walking to.

My husband's folks are there.

THE MAN (*musingly*):

'T will take a while. —

At least till midnight. (*With decision*): It
would never do.

You can not walk it with that tired boy. —

How old is he? A sturdy lad.

THE WOMAN:

Just six.

THE MAN (*ingratiatingly*):

Come here, young man. What have you
there? A toy?

CHILD:

No, sir: a torch, — just berries stuck on
sticks, —

To light the way with. — Have you any
cakes?

I'm hungry, Mister. (*Smiling up wistfully
at the Man.*)

THE MAN (*with decision, turning to the
Woman*):

Give the babe to me,

'And rest you here.

THE WOMAN (*as the baby wakes, seating herself and beginning to nurse it*):

How my poor body aches!
So Shepherdstown is miles away?

THE MAN (*vaguely*):

May be. —
My *farm* is close. You'll stop there for
awhile,
Till I search out the people you would know
At Shepherdstown. (*Suddenly*): Your boy
now has the smile
Of someone that I know, or knew. But, no,
Impossible.

THE WOMAN (*impressively*):

He has his father's eyes.
His father came from Shepherdstown, you
see.

THE MAN (*intently*):

And may I ask his name?

THE WOMAN:

His name was Wise —
Jim Wise. — Perhaps you know his family?
You live so near to Shepherdstown.

THE MAN (*with emotion*):

Why, yes.
I know his family. Why, Jim, now, —
Jim —

Why, my name 's Wise! — My brother Jim,
I guess,
You 're speaking of. — *Years* since we heard
of him.

THE WOMAN (*incredulously*):

Where do you live, sir?

THE MAN (*dreamily*):

Not so far from here:

Beyond this strip of wood. — You see, I
farm.

Jim never did like farming. It was queer.
The City swallowed him. He came to harm,
So I have heard, through women.

THE WOMAN (*vehemently, starting to her feet*):

It 's a lie! —

Here is the only woman whom he knew,
And here the children you may know her by.

THE MAN:

I meant no insult. Why, I know how true
A woman you are. You must have helped
my brother. —

We heard he 'd married, that was all. —
Well, well.

And you 're his widow? — This is news for
mother.

THE BOY (*who has been looking wide-eyed at
the Man during all this talk*):

It 's suppertime. It 's nearly time to start.

THE MAN (*laughing and hugging the boy close up to him*):

Why, so it is. And there's a lot to tell
To your old Granny. — Seems incredible. —
Look at me, boy. Why, you're Jim's counterpart.

THE BOY (*looking earnestly at the Man*):

What is a counterpart? — Where people
eat? —
And will't be cake? or something like a
tart? —

THE MAN (*with decision in his manner and voice*):

Yes, it'll be cake. — Now hurry. — Come
this way.
But I must carry you. Your little feet
Have earned a ride. (*Mounting boy on his
back*): There!

THE WOMAN (*smiling wanly*):

You're Jim's brother Ray.

THE MAN (*nodding over his shoulder*):

How did you guess?

THE WOMAN:

Just by the way you treat
My little boy and me. One need not say. —
Often I've heard Jim tell of you.

THE MAN (*pointing*):

But look!

There is *your* home now; by the roadside
there,

Among the flowers, beyond this cressy brook.

THE WOMAN:

How honeysuckle-sweet! And what a bed
Of Giant-of-Battle roses! — Everywhere
Are flowers! — Just as Jim has often said.
He loved to picture it. . . . All those iron
years

The memory of this place kept soft his heart.
He was a good man — Jim.

THE MAN:

Don't cry now. Tears
Are done with. This is home. You've done
your part
By Jim, and now we'll do our part by you.

THE WOMAN (*drying her eyes*):

It seems to me too beautiful to be true.
It is a dream I'll wake from.

THE MAN (*smiling at her*):

Not this week
Nor many a week to come. — There's mother,
see!
Look where she waits now in that sunset
streak
Beside the gate, gray in the shrubbery.

THE WOMAN:

What a kind face she has; it breathes of rest.
But *we* 've no right here.

THE MAN:

That 's no way to speak!
Our home is your home. — Don't look so distressed.
You are Jim's widow. — Mother 'll daughter you. —
And there 're your children! — Don't, or won't you see
You 're giving more than you receive? — I do. —
Now let 's meet mother. — Leave it all to me.

ROBBER GOLD

THERE hangs the painting. — Will you sit
And hear me tell how it was born? —
Or, rather, why I value it? —
It may be that it helps my yarn:
Prompts memory: saves me, say, from scorn
Of unbelievers, such as you,
Who may not think my story true.

You like the picture, eh? — It's clear. —
My tale epitomized, you see. —
For me it has the thrill, the fear
Of that tense moment, suddenly
Which swept aside my poverty
And made me rich. . . . Ai, ai! — Who knows
What just a heel-tap may disclose!

I who sit comfortable now
With friends beside the wine, cigars,
Was less than dirt beneath the plough
Of Fortune once. — Read here the scars
Of lost black battles and old wars
With Fate. . . . But there's my tale to tell. —
I fear I never do it well.

In brief, then: — In a land of thieves
Was one — a thief and bushman; who, —

Gray as gray winter when it grieves,
 Housed me one night. — It seems he knew
 Of treasure somewhere — had a clue,
 And told me. — Well, as many had,
 I thought him but a fool, or mad.

Until one day I found the place —
 A bald hill rimmed with grizzly grass,
 And seamed with wrinkles, like a face,
 Down which two streams, like tears, did race
 From one round pool, as still as glass,
 A Cyclop's eye, browed thick with thorn,
 That seemed to leer a look of scorn.

The sunset struck athwart the land
 A glare of hate; an evil flame;
 Fierce as a thought that lifts a hand
 Of murder in an outlaw band,
 Commanding to some deed of shame;
 And like a signal overhead,
 One cloud blew wild, a ragged red.

'A cut-throat place for cut-throat deeds!
 With death's-head looks all wrung and wryed.—
 Was it a bloodstain in the weeds?
 Or but some autumn plant whose seeds
 Dropped scarlet on the gray hillside? —
 It made me catch my breath a space,
 Fearing to see a dead man's face.

I left my horse: and looked around
 For that dwarfed pine, he said the waste

Was marked with, — where the clue was
found. . . .

No tree was there — save on the ground
A rotted trunk with lichens laced;
So old it looked, it seemed to me
It had been dead a century.

A rock, he said, with arrows hewn
Lay at its root. — Well, there were rocks!
The place was pierced and piled and strewn
With thousands; — none that held a rune,
To point me to that buried box. —
As soon search out one bone of bones
On Doomsday as that stone of stones.

By then the sunset glare had died,
And darkness, with an haggard eye
Of moon, crept down the gaunt hillside.
I sat me on that tree and tried
To think the thing out. Did he lie?
That bearded beggar, old and gray,
That bushman I had found one day.

What right had one so foul and poor,
So helpless, say, in such a spot,
With so much wealth? Not even a door
To his vile hovel, where I bore
Him dying when I found him shot. —
What right had he, so poor and old,
To secrets, say, of buried gold?

Then on my mind it flashed like rain :
 The man was mad ; — had lived alone
 With dreams of riches, — it was plain, —
 Till gold possessed him bone and brain. —
 Just then my heel wrenched up a stone . . .
 And there ! as plain as God's half moon
 In heaven, an arrow point lay hewn.

“ A madman ? ” — and I laughed awry.
 “ A fool might dig to prove his dream ! ” —
 But if unproved, a fool were I
 To come so near to pass it by,
 For other fools, say, to redeem !
 When, one could see, — you understand, —
 The thing lay ready to my hand.

Well ; what I found this frame declares —
 This canvas — see ? — A hill of rocks. —
 The artist ? — Why, a name that shares
 Its fame with none. — The lean moon stares
 Upon a grave ; a bursten box ;
 A dead man by them, gray and old. —
 I call my picture “ Robber Gold.”

THE BATTLEFIELD

AN OLD SOLDIER TO HIS DOG

COME here, old fellow, let us sit and talk. —
What think you of the landscape there below,
My field of battle? — Was it worth the walk? —
What? — growling? — Do you mean to tell me
No?

— Look at our cabin now, the sunset flecks! —
Does it not seem to smile at us? — Its glow
Is as if joy dwelt there of long ago,
And not the misery of two old wrecks.
From some quite different time, the good old
past,

When happiness housed in it, unconcealed,
And round it flowed the blessings of the field,
It got that happy look it still holds fast.
You know how once you raced the rabbit here,
Or watched the sheep; or home the cows would
bring;

Stopping a moment there beside the spring,
While from the grain the bob-white's cry rose
clear?

There went the path through meadows, dewy
bright,

That to the lover said, "I am the way,
The very shortest, to your love to-night.

Come, follow me, and clasp your heart's delight."

The cornfield's billows there no longer sway;
Weeds and the briar usurp their place of
plumes;

No orchard now within that valley blooms
Or bears ripe fruit, where those old boughs
decay,

And death with barren hand the hillside grips:
Our path has nothing more of love to tell,
And grimly closes tight its grassy lips;
While over all oblivion lays its spell.

Only our cabin with its pear tree seems
Glad, unawakened from its oldtime dreams.

'T is like the land on yonder side our heath:
Though long ago joy vanished from its arms,
Still with a gown of flowers it decks its charms,
Adorns its brow with love's perennial wreath.
True to the old, already mindless of
The war that swept it, yearly it wears its
roses.

In that small place to live is good enough,
So snugly cabined, quaint 'mid blossoming
closes.

There one can talk with every wind that blows,
And with the neighborly rain that comes at
night;

And there one may look up and greet the light,
And take the first and last kiss she bestows.

When night weds star to star with ray on ray,
And you, my old hound, to the round moon bay,

How good it is to lie there, looking out,
Marking what she, the pale moon, is about,
With her white stealth; and, gliding silvery wan,
To watch her towards our slumbering cabin
creep,
Trying with ghostly fingers until dawn
To rob it, through that window, of its sleep. . . .
Get up, old fellow; we are rested now.
Let's move about. 'T will help us talk some-
how.

Where was I? — Oh! — Why, up there with the
moon
Waiting your bay. — But, see you! where they
gather,
Whose limbs were cannon-food long since? or
rather
War's vintage. — Look, now, where they march
afar
In lines of sunset, settling on yon dune
Where batteries bloomed once, star on crimson
star,
Oblations on the altar-stone of war.
Altar? — old dog! — No! slaughter-house and
furnace
Of Hell was this same field: a red Avernus
Of thunder and of flame and bugle-call . . .
There where that banner of mist streams over
all,
Look! look! the charge! the phantom plunge
and fall

Of bayonet lines of hurtling horse and men. . . .
 All silent now, at peace there in the grave,
 Foe side by side with foeman; coward and
 brave;
 Rent limbs and bodies; broken hearts of mothers
 And lovers, too; all silent. — God be praised!
 'T is past and done with, holocaust and all,
 And what we saw there was a spectre raised
 Of fancy merely, thinking on the fall
 Of our Confederacy. — How natural
 It seemed at first; but now the scene's erased. —
 What does it matter? we're aristocrats
 Still, my good fellow, spite of all the shame
 Of that defeat. We may be poor as rats,
 But we are proud, though mutilated, lame. . . .
 Of my poor body I have given a member
 To that lost Cause. . . . You will forgive me,
 even

If I do mention it. But now, by Heaven!
 I have to speak of things which I remember:
 For instance . . . no; you will not take it ill —
 You know the little grave there on the hill? —
Her grave, old boy: you will remember Nellie, —
 My sweetheart and your playmate of that past
 You hate to hear of, — who shall haunt me till
 This hollow drum, my heart, beats its reveille,
 Its final challenge; and 't is taps at last
 For all my dreams — dust on the whirling blast.

You think me bitter. But it's hard each day
 To smile and lie when o'er the heart the harrow

Of loss has gone; it irks one to the marrow
When there is no one left to smooth away
The grief of old misfortune; or delay
Regret, whose burden is remembered pain,
And that despair which says "All — hope — is
— vain."

If you were only human, and could draw
A little nearer, I might tell you more,
Old dog: but if *you* have a bone to gnaw
You are contented: well may you ignore
Regrets and memories that naught restore. —
When dogs remember, now, I ask you whether
'T is joy or grief they feel, or both together? —
Ah, my old friend, you sympathize, I know;
I see it in your eyes; whose sadness flatters;
And till the news far as our village scatters,
There, of my death, I hope to keep you so:
And while we have each other nothing matters.

The night draws on. Look how the gray mist
flies,
Wind-hunted of the Autumn overhead —
Or is it some dim army of the dead
In wild retreat, filling the heavens with dread?
Hark! what is that? a bugle blast that dies? —
Or wild-fowl honking South through starless
skies? —
I read their message — winter and hard
times. . . .
The evil genius of the place again

Plays black tricks with the mind, devising
crimes:

And though I flee it, it is all in vain:

Through bush and briar it follows, dark, de-
riding: —

“O fool,” it cries, “with all your doubts and
fears,

What! have you lived these many loveless years,
And found no cure yet for the curse of
tears?” —

And all my wounds, with that, break from their
hiding. —

(As through a village, with vile gibes and
screams,

Scorn taunts a fool on, wrapped in foolish
dreams,

So, jeering, through the dark it follows ever.) —

This will not do. With my one leg we ’ll never
Get home to-night. Something has gone amiss
In me, I fear, old dog. I feel almost
As if we two were lost, were utterly lost. . . .
We must get home; get home; where firelight
is —

Firelight and comfort, that shall lay this ghost.

THE HOUSE OF NIGHT

It had been raining all that night;
And now the mists were everywhere:
They wrapped the house from roof to stair,
And glimmered phantom faces white
At every window: wild of hair
They streamed around me in the light,
That found me standing on the stair.

The lonely hills were all around;
The ancient house loomed out alone;
So gray, that he, who had not known,
Beholding it from higher ground,
Had sworn it was of mist, not stone;
So vague it was, so shadow-drowned,
So gray and still, and dim, unknown.

My cap and cloak were beaded gray
With wisps of rain that gleamed like sleet;
If anyone had chanced to meet
My dripping form, I dare to say
No phantom in a winding sheet
Had filled his heart with more dismay,
As when the dead and living meet.

The forest I had paced till dawn
Was like a false heart filled with fear;

Its darkness threatened at my ear
And ever held a weapon drawn,
Waiting to strike; now with a sneer
Regarding me; now urging on
With menaced murder at my ear.

It hurled its roots like ropes across
My path; and from each humpback tree
Spat black its rain, in spite, at me;
And dragged its toad-life from the moss
To croak contempt and obloquy;
And now and then its limbs it 'd toss
And strike a serpent-fang at me.

This was not all: Its outrage leered
Monstrosities in fungoid forms
From toadstool faces: twisted arms
Of mistletoe, that, gesturing, jeered:
Its hate laid nets for me in swarms
Of webs, blindfolding sight, that bleared
Each path that flung out spider arms.

Yet I had won through all, and come
To this gray house of mist at last:
This ancient manse, with which was cast
My lot of life and all its sum,
Piled with the records of the past;
That stared upon me, dark and dumb,
As on a soul of God outcast.

Or as one gazes on the dead
Whom he has hated for some sin. —
And yet I too must enter in
This house that night inhabited,
This house of mist, made closest kin
With all my dreams. — I felt no dread,
But struck the door, and entered in.

THE HOUSE OF PRIDE

WEEDS will spring up around the place,
And summer and the winter rain
Obliterate of it all trace —
As in the order of the brain
Terror and loss and mortal pain
Work madness; and, where flowers of thought
Once bloomed, all 's wild and soul-distraught.

The dodder's tawny tangle here
Will spread a strangling web around;
And from the trees the barren year
Drop bitter fruit upon the ground —
As in a heart, where love was found,
Hatred takes hold; and hope, perchance,
Puts on despair's black countenance.

So be it. Death shall have its way
With all that makes for fine and fair. —
Yes; each grim year, day after day,
Shall sow oblivion's garden there,
Until the place is grown one stare
Of wilderness; like some blind face,
In whose wild look light has no place.

Yes, this shall be! And it is just,
Since here a human heart was slain,
And love was sacrificed for lust,

When out of gold was forged a chain
To hold a soul to all things vain:
A woman's soul, a breath of fire,
Bound will-o'-wisp-like to the mire.

Now it shall burn — the Godless house!
The house of ancient pedigree! —
No more shall it, in wild carouse,
Lord it; and in depravity
Stare down contempt on misery;
Its insolence and arrogance
Scorning all lesser circumstance.

Now it shall burn! — A little while
And those long windows blaze with fear,
That eye-like now on darkness smile,
The moonlight in them like a sneer,
That makes the whole vile house one leer
Of lordliness, that soon shall change
To terror and know something strange.

Think, what a form of fire shall take
The midnight with surprise! and cleanse
This soiled spot, as with flaming rake,
Of its defilement: fierce, intense,
Piling the refuse heap immense
Of that which never stood for soul,
Making the senses all its goal.

Yea; let the flame become a sword,
To strike pollution from the land!
And, crimson-flourished, cleave the horde

Of Hell's persistence; like the brand
Of God Himself; and, fiery fanned,
Sweep down the twain in judgment there,
Catching them blazing by the hair.

So it is written. They must burn! —
The bridegroom Lust; the purchased bride! —
So that my soul may cease to yearn
And walk in darkness, hollow-eyed. —
Yea, let it fall, — this House of Pride! —
And flame to Heaven, with all my curse,
And all my love, that still is hers!

GUILT

THE fat weeds, rooted in decay,
Make rank the autumn of the way:
There is no light, except the glow
Of fox-fire by the stagnant creek,
And one slim wisp, that, gliding low,
Hangs blue above the agaric,
That oozes from the rotting tree,
Where ghost-flowers point pale hands at me.

The forest drips and dreams of death,
That breathes on me its weedy breath,
Dark with the wailing wind and wet:
And all around me drops of rain
Sound weird as feet of phantoms met
Among the woods whose leaves complain:
And evermore some ancient fear,
Wind-like, keeps muttering at my ear.

And once, as when one takes his stand,
The storm thrust forth a sudden hand
And struck the wood: the trees around
Roared sidewise; and, like frightened hags,
Rent at their tattered robes; the ground
Rustled with wildness of their rags;
And overhead an owlet's cry,
Like some lost ghost, went shuddering by.

The place is cursed since that dark day
When black-masked men came here to slay:
The dead walk here since yonder swung
On yon bleak tree, that lent its aid,
An innocent life, that, wild of tongue,
In vain to man and Heaven prayed.
The place is haunted; earth and air
Seem burdened with a black despair.

I should have spoken: 't was *my* lie
That slew him: I who let him die. —
But no! — it was *God's* part to see;
To give some sign; to let men know:
To point accusingly at me,
And bid them see who struck the blow:
To bid them know; to set them right —
Not leave it all to me to-night.

THE OLD LOVE

As winds bend grasses all one way
And take the fields with rout,
Old memories swept my thoughts one day
And turned my life about.
As roots, through leaves which drink the rain,
Divine the broken drought,
My heart grew conscious through the brain
Of sorrow gone, joy come again,
And hope's wild banners out.

And on the road, the long-lost road,
I found my feet once more:
'T was night; and through the darkness glowed
Her window's starry core.
Again it thundered in the hills,
As once it had before,
When from the rose ran little rills,
And we two 'mid the daffodils
First kissed outside her door.

Now through the white wrack overhead
The round moon waded on,
Like some dim woman, pale of tread,
Who by a dream is drawn.
The night shook down its rainy hair
With fireflies jewelled wan;

And through its fragrance, ever fair,
Again she ran to greet me there,
As if I'd never gone.

Again the honeysuckle scent
Of her sweet hair I breathed;
Again to mine her lips were lent,
My arms about her wreathed:
Again the night around us sighed,
And from its cloud unsheathed
A star, as there I opened wide
My heart to her, who laughed and cried,
And love's old answer breathed.

Long had she waited; I delayed;
Until, as Heaven designed,
Immediate, ardent, unafraid,
Her memory swept my mind:
And with it need of home and love,
And all life holds in kind
With man, to lift the soul above
The years and give hearts hope enough
To do the work assigned.

IN LILAC TIME

THROUGH orchards of old apple-trees,
That Spring makes musical with bees;
By garden ways of vines and flowers
Where, twittering sweet, the bird-box towers,

And swallows sun their plumes:
The path leads winding to the gate, —
Hung with its rusty chain and weight, —
That opens on a lilac-walk
Where dreams of love and memories talk,
Born of the dim perfumes.

The old house stands with porches wide
And locust-trees on either side;
Its windows, kindly as the eyes
Of friendship, smiling at the skies,

Each side its open door:
Beside its steps May-lilies lift
Bell'd sprays of snow in drift on drift;
And in the door, a lily too,
Again she stands, the one he knew
In days that are no more.

Again he meets her, brown of hair,
Among the clustered lilacs there;
The sun is set; the blue dusk falls;
A nesting bird another calls;

A star leaps in the sky:
Again he breathes the lilac scent
And rose; again her head is bent;
And oh! again, beside the gate,
To see the round moon rise they wait,
Before they kiss good-bye.

Long years have passed: the times, since then,
Have changed: and customs too and men:
But she has never changed to him,
Nor has the house, so old and dim,
Where once they said good-bye;
That place, which Spring keeps ever fair
Through memories of her face and hair —
Unchanged, like some immortal rhyme,
Where evermore 't is lilac-time,
And love can never die.

THE RETURN

THERE was no element of grief
In that old land's stolidity:
No trace of memory, or relief
For heartbreak, in its apathy:
Rather a broad complacency,
A satisfied, plebeian air,
That breathed content and never a care.

Yet it was here that youth had died
And love was buried years ago.
There was no hint on any side
Of all that wretchedness and woe.
And I, who thought some trace would show
Upon its face in sympathy,
Read nothing there of tragedy.

Instead, the birds sang in the trees:
And wood and meadow were a-sway
With gladness of the bounding breeze,
And wildflowers tossing with the day:
The very clouds, in white array,
That swept their shadows o'er the sward,
Looked down a lofty disregard.

I sat me down upon a stone,
Beside the tree where once I stood
When love denied me, and alone

My soul groped blindly through the wood. —
 I sat me down in solitude
 As once before: and sad the years
 Assailed my heart with bitter tears.

The place was hateful to me now;
 That place, which love had so endeared;
 Wherein my soul had thought, somehow,
 Its search would find what it had feared
 Yet longed to find: A record seared
 Upon its face. But I could find
 Nothing of what was in my mind.

And while I sat there by the pine
 Two children passed — a girl and boy:
His children! — *hers!* — who should be mine! —
 I knew them by their looks of joy:
 One had her eyes: without alloy
 The other had her golden hair. —
 Ah God! it was too much to bear!

How could the land sit so serene!
 The heaven above look such content!
 Tempest and night should set the scene,
 And in its midst, made evident,
 The heartbreak and bewilderment
 Of life; and the futility
 Of effort and its agony.

But Nature for all human woe
 And suffering has no regard:

She goes her calm way here below
Forever armed, forever barred
Against revealment. — Iron hard. —
So thought I as I turned away. . . .
'T was Nature broke my heart that day.

THE GRAY GARDEN

HERE in this room she used to sit
Where, by that window, stands her chair:
Often her hands forgot to knit
Intent upon the garden there.
An old kind face, that kept its youth
As flavor keeps a winter pear;
The soul of Esther, heart of Ruth
Were hers that helped her still to bear.

The garden, whispering through its flowers,
Spoke to her heart of many things,
That helped her pass the twilight hours
With old, divine rememberings.
There she would wander like a ghost,
Or stand just where that white rose swings,
And listen, for an hour almost,
How Dusk went by on nighthawk wings.

No flowers were hers of gaudy hue,
Remindful of a different day;
The candytuft and feverfew
Helped her gray dreams in some dim way:
Nor was there any rich perfume,
Scarlet or gold, but all was gray,
Subdued of fragrance as of bloom,
That helped her quiet soul to pray.

The garden seemed to fill a need;
'T was like an old acquaintanceship,
Or love; — like that she bade "God speed,"
Who raised her fingers to his lip
And left, returning nevermore
From yonder narrow, far-off strip
Of purple sea and saffron shore,
Whence vanished, years ago, his ship.

WHEN THE YEARS WERE YOUNG

THE turtle's egg by the shallow pool
Whitened a spot on the sandy gray;
And there by the log, where the shade greened
cool,
The whippoorwill's nest on the brown moss lay.

I went by the path that we often went
When the years were young and our hearts were,
too;
And the wind, that was warm with the wildrose
scent,
Breathed on my eyes till I thought it you.

'T was the old, wild path where the horsemint
grows,
And the milkweed's blossom makes musk the
air;
And I plucked for your memory there a rose,
As once I had for your nut-brown hair.

And I came to the bridge that is built of logs,
Where the creek laughs down like a dimpled
child;
Where we used to hark to the mellow frogs
When the dusk sat dim in the ferny wild.

And I stood on the bridge and I heard your feet
Tremble its floor as I heard them when
I was a boy, whom you ran to meet,
Bare of foot and of years just ten.

The old log-bridge in the bramble lane,
Where the black-eyed-Susans make bright its
 marge;
Where the teasel's tuft is a thorny stain,
And the wild sunflower rays out its targe.

Where berries cluster their ripened red,
And, under the bush, on the creek's low bank,
The bob-white huddles an egg-round bed,
The kingfisher flits and the crane stands lank.

Your small tanned hand again was laid
In the briar-brown clasp of my freckled own;
And down from the bridge we went to wade
Where the turtle's egg by the water shone.

And again I heard the wood-dove coo;
And the scent of the woodland made me sad;
For the two reminded my heart of you,
When you were a girl and I was a lad.

It is not well for a man to go
The old lost ways that he went when young,
When Love walked with him, her eyes aglow,
A blue sunbonnet beside her swung.

It is not well for woman or man
To come again to the place they knew
In the years that are gone; where their love
 began,
The love that died as all things do.

It was not well for my heart, I know,
On the old log-bridge in the woodland there:
Your eyes looked up from the creek below,
And in every zephyr I felt your hair.

Your face smiled at me, your beauty yearned
In every flower, or song I heard:
No matter — wherever my eyes were turned
You stood remindful with look and word.

You laid your hand on my heart: your hand,
Once light as a wisp and wild with joy;
And my heart grew heavy, you understand,
With the dreams that died with the girl and boy.

It was not well for my heart and me
On the old log-bridge in the woodland glen;
For there I met with your memory —
And the days that are gone come not again.

THE HILL ROAD

THE old road, the hill road, the road that used
to go
Through briar and bloom and gleam and gloom
among the wooded ways, —
Oh, would that we might follow it as once we
did, you know!
The old road, the home road, the road of happy
days.

The old road, the long road, the road among the
hills,
The hills of old enchantments and the hollow-
lands of dreams,
Again it calls with memories of days that noth-
ing stills,
And down the years, as down a lane, its home-
light winks and gleams.

Again we smell its dust, the rain distills into
perfume;
Again the night, with fingertip of firefly-twin-
kling gold,
Points us the path to follow home through deeps
of dewy bloom,
And on the bough the whippoorwill is calling as
of old.

The old road, the lost road, the road where,
heart and hand,
Simplicity and innocence of childhood used to
play,
Till o'er the hills Ambitions came, loud-riding
through the land,
And bade us mount and follow them, forever
and a day.

The old road, the hill road, the road we galloped
down,
The road we left of sweet content for one of
moil and toil,
The road we fain would find again, and those
two playmates brown,
Barefooted Happiness and Health, tanned chil-
dren of the soil.

Again I hear them in the wind a-calling me to
come;
From fern and flower they nod their heads or
lift a faery face;
And in the twilight there they dance unto the
crickets' thrum,
While friendly voices say good-night within a
rose-sweet place.

The old road, the hill road, the road that you
and I

Are fain to find and take again and once again
to roam! —

The road into the oldtime hills where we at last
would lie,

Secure within our mother's arms and safe again
at home.

ROSE AND JASMINE

I

ROSES, in the garden old,
Glorious with ephemeral gold,
Blooming by the old stone-wall,
Did *her* touch give you your scent? —
(Ah, how well now I recall
Lincoln then was President) —
As, white-gowned, for mask or ball,
With her lover here she went.
From your fragrant breath, almost,
I could vow I see her ghost
Rise, as when she stood here sweet
Mid your blossoms: catch the beat
Of her happy heart and feet
As when here they came to meet, —
Lovers young, who now are cold,
Now are cold,
Roses in the garden old.

II

Jasmine, blooming overhead,
Deep-embowering porch and shed,
Framing-in one windowsill,
Was it here on you she leant? —
(I remember with a thrill

Lincoln then was President)—
And from her sad eyes and still
Did you learn that look? she sent
Through your blossoms, very far,
To the southmost seat of war.
Mid your branches, starry there,
I can see them now, I swear,
Filled with weeping and despair,
As when oft she leaned in prayer
For her lover, long since dead,
 Long since dead,
Jasmine blooming overhead.

THE CLOSE OF DAY

COME away, for Love is dead,
And the hope we knew is banished;
Gone the halo from his head,
From his face the glory vanished:
Come away, for Love is dead.

Fold the white hands on his breast;
Part the bright hair, smooth it slowly:
Come away, and let him rest
In the place he long made holy:
Fold the white hands on his breast.

Lay no rose upon his heart —
All our roses too are perished:
Say no word; but now depart —
Nothing's left us here we cherished:
Lay no rose upon his heart.

Kiss no more the locks of gold,
And the lips so silent sleeping:
Let no tear fall as of old —
What availeth kiss or weeping!
Kiss no more the locks of gold.

Come away, and hope no more:
Love is dead and life grown lonely.

Joy's departed at the door,
Memory remaineth only:
Come away and hope no more.

Now befalls the end of day;
End of all; yea, we must sever:
By this Cross beside the way
Kneel and pray, then part forever:
Now befalls the end of day.

FEUDISTS

ALONG the mountain road she came,
In dingy gown and heavy shoes;
Above her broke the redbud's flame,
And oak and maple flushed with hues;
And everywhere was boisterous news
Of Spring who led o'er hills and streams
The white invasion of her dreams.

Upon a rock beside the way
She sat, so still, so dim of tone —
Of such an unobtrusive gray —
You 'd thought her portion of the stone,
Save for her eyes, where fever shone,
Beneath the bonnet, frayed and torn,
And pinned together with a thorn.

Wrapped in a faded shawl she bore
A child, so tiny and so wan
One marveled how a child so poor,
So desolate and small and drawn,
Could live. — Or had it died at dawn? —
So heedless, so regardless she
Who never even looked to see.

And all around her was carouse
Of buds and birds and blooms and bees;

And Heaven, from under azure brows,
Bent on the world a look of peace:
But she — she saw not one of these —
Nothing of Earth's great joy divine,
Or, if she saw, she gave no sign.

Her attitude of mind refused
To be distracted. Nature glowed:
Above her head the wild bee cruised:
Leaves whispered: dogwood on her snowed:
The very tree above her flowed
With wild-bird music: and the brook
Kept calling her to come and look.

But she — she saw not, neither heard,
Watching the road in furtive wise. —
Once only, when it seemed a bird,
Far-off, called shrilly, in her eyes
A startled look came — fear, surmise,
That raised her swift, alert and still,
Listening . . . for what upon the hill? —

A shot: wild hoofs: that rapidly
Neared and tore past her, standing dumb,
Tense-drawn in waiting misery,
As if she felt Disaster come
Galloping, instead of — only some
Strange, riderless horse, that made her weak
With dread and mad desire — to shriek.

Then down the mountain, grim and tall,
A man came: he, her fear and bliss:

A rifle on his arm and all
Fierce passions in his face. — No kiss
Was his or greeting: only this —
He took the child, that wailed: and they
Went swiftly down the mountain way.

THE MOUND MEN

I

THEY brought him back from the battlefield
On a bier of boughs and of spear and shield,
The foeman's flint in his flesh and bone:
They brought him back to the thud and drone
Of the snake-skin drum and the flute of stone,
And the medicine dance that shrieked and
reeled.

II

Fierce and fain he had led the fight
From blood-red dawn till death-black night:
Fain and fierce in the hollow wood
Where the eagle circled and screamed for food,
And the bison passed like a rolling flood,
And the panther leapt like a shaft of light.

III

Loud in a land of streams and caves,
Of crags and woods, where they found their
graves,
Hate met hate with shriek and shout,
And arrows blotted the daylight out;
Stealth met strength and rage met rout
And swept to death with a thousand braves.

IV

Spear of flint and arrow and bow
And axe of granite gave blow for blow,
Till there by the stream, where the bison track
Led down from the hills, the foe fell back,
And the white salt-lick with blood flowed black
For love of a chief a spear laid low.

V

As the red moon rose like a banner-stone
They bore him down from the hills alone;
As the red moon sank like a battle blade
They bore him into the forest glade
Where the glare of the fires made red the shade,
And the Mound Men piped on their flutes of
bone.

VI

With head to the West they brought him home,
And built him a bed of the forest loam;
With head to the West they laid him down
With his axe on his breast, like a great king's
crown;
And five of his men, that were strong and
brown,
They chose for his guard in the life to come.

VII

Streaked with ochre and brave with beads
Forth they strode to the drone of reeds;

Round his body they kneeled and stared
Chanting low while the priestmen bared
Knives of flint as they whirled, wild-haired;
Danced, loud-singing the dead man's deeds.

VIII

Five of his braves, who chose to fare
The way with him and its dangers share:
Five of his braves! — and the flint knives fell,
While the death-dance wailed with the medicine
spell;
Five of his braves, who would bear them well
Side by side with the big chief there.

IX

Side by side, with their bows and spears,
To be his guard through the countless years,
They laid them down in a stalwart row
On skins of the bear and the buffalo,
Beads and feathers and paint aglow
And rings of keel on their hands and ears.

X

For the Land where the Hunt should never cease
They placed by the chief his pipe of peace
And knife and arrows. . . . Then based it wide
And heaped the mound that should hold and
hide

Their chief of chiefs and his warrior pride
Through the ceaseless roll of the centuries.

NOTE: — *In the year 1897, near Richmond, Ky., a burial mound was opened which contained the skeletons of six men of the Stone Age. The principal one was lying with head to the West. In the femur of his left leg, driven entirely through the bone, was a large flint spear-head. . . . About the bodies were found many instruments of stone and clay.*

THE SPANISH MAIN

It 's, Ho! for a sail and a good stiff breeze,
And a trail of foam, with the wind abaft!
When we turn our keel to the Caribbees,
And sweep the ocean of every craft,
Each hulk and hull that the Fiend hath sold,
With her Spanish hold crammed full of gold, —

Heave ho! my bullies!

To crowd her sail till she catch our hail,
A ten-pound shot through her quarter-rail —

Heave ho! my bullies! and a heave!

Tattooed and tanned, the Devil's own crew,
Dutch and Lascar, and French and Greek,
Of every Nation and every hue,
A cutlass scar on the brow or cheek,
And hair in queues of the murder-thumb, —
Made mad with rum for the work to come, —

Heave ho! my bullies!

To stake with a curse our lives for a purse,
And steer for Hell with a roaring verse, —

Heave ho! my bullies! and a heave!

The sun goes down like a blot of blood
As our boats swarm up to her towering hull,
And her galleon decks with the battle thud, —

Yo ho! for the banner of bones and skull!
 And the buccaneer crew that will have its fill: —
 And it's "Cut and kill!" till the ship is still, —

Heave ho! my bullies!

Till pistol and dirk have done their pirate work,
 And the last man yields as the night falls
 murk, —

Heave ho! my bullies! and a heave!

The moon comes up like a broad doubloon
 As the last tar totters along the plank:
 The women — ho! ho! — by the light of the
 moon

We dice for them while their eyes stare blank,
 And they pray to God who heeds them not,
 While we share each lot o' the loot we got, —

Heave ho! my bullies!

Then a torch to the hull as away we pull,
 And a prayer that the Devil be bountiful, —

Heave ho! my bullies! and a heave!

THE BURDEN OF THE BURIED DEAD

HE heard a footstep on the road
Before the black cock woke and crew:
It was the step of one he knew,
Of one who bore a weary load,
 When the lonely night was waning.

He dared not stop or turn his head.
He knew what followed through the night.
He knew the burden was not light,
The burden of the buried dead,
 When the dreary dawn was gaining.

He knew that his dead self would pass,
Bowed earthward by that thing of fear:
He heard its footstep very near,
Behind him in the withered grass —
 Where the wind kept on complaining.

But when the black cock crew for dawn
His soul took heart to turn and see —
Empty the road and shadowy
Stretched far away with naught thereon —
 And the wild, gray dawn broke raining.

REFLECTIONS

HAS N'T she a roguish eye? —
Oh, the mischief in it! —
Who 'd not love to live or die
In it every minute?

Has n't she a laughing lip?
Oh, the rose that wreathes there! —
Who 'd not be the sighs that slip,
Or the breath that breathes there?

Has n't she a dainty ear? —
Oh, the dearness of it! —
Who 'd not have it very near,
Like the flower above it?

Has n't she a darling foot? —
Oh, the way she trips it! —
Who 'd not love to be the boot
That this moment clips it?

Has n't she a lissome waist? —
Oh, the grace that molds it! —
Who 'd not be the belt that 's placed
Round it and that holds it?

Oft and oft she smiles at me,
Smiles as she draws nearer. —
How she loves me! — But, you see,
I am just her mirror.

“OH, WHEN I HEARD”

OH, when I heard that you were dead,
Sweet girl, to whom I gave my youth,
Again my heart shook with the tread
Of love more strong than truth.

And if it had been otherwise —
Had we not met to part again,
Th’ appealing memory of your eyes
Had not seared soul and brain.

But from the past they gaze at me,
And break my heart with love denied. . . .
O God, blot out their memory!
And love that lied!

ON THE DEATH OF T. B. A.

THE cavalier cry of Lovelace and Carew
And Herrick’s lyric call together grew,
And here in Aldrich, — lark and nightingale, —
Made sweet with song Art’s new-world inter-
vale.

MODERN POETRY

RELUCTANT praise and meagre kindness,
In spite of all thy beauty, see,
 O Poetry,
Th' ignoble World now gives to thee:
While Fame, with strange, pretended blindness,
Through whom thou hadst authority
Through many a golden century,
Fares on her way with other company.

THE SECRET ROOM

THERE is a room the soul has set apart,
Dark in the House of Dreams and Melody;
A secret room, no eye may ever see,
Hung with the perished passions of the heart:
There once I entered with a Dream of Art,
And sat me down with Love and Memory
Before a harp's decaying ebony,
From whose dim strings, I felt, old ghosts might
start.

And suddenly, through some superior will,
My hand went forth and, groping blindly, swept
One chord of chords, hollow with loss and fear;
And all the darkness shuddered and was still:
Then in the silence something near me crept,
And on my hands dropped tear on terrible tear.

THE WATCHER ON THE TOWER

I

THE VOICE OF A MAN

WHAT of the Night, O Watcher?

THE VOICE OF A WOMAN

Yea, what of it?

THE WATCHER

A star has risen; and a wind blows strong.

VOICE OF THE MAN

The Night is dark.

THE WATCHER

But God is there above it.

VOICE OF THE WOMAN

The Night is dark; the Night is dark and long.

II

VOICE OF THE MAN

What of the Night, O Watcher?

VOICE OF THE WOMAN

Night of sorrow!

THE WATCHER

Out of the East there comes a sound, like song.

VOICE OF THE MAN

The Night is dark.

THE WATCHER

Have courage! There's To-morrow.

VOICE OF THE WOMAN

The Night is dark; the Night is dark and long.

III

VOICE OF THE MAN

What of the Night, O Watcher?

VOICE OF THE WOMAN

Is it other?

THE WATCHER

I see a gleam; a thorn of light; a thong.

VOICE OF THE MAN

The Night is dark.

THE WATCHER

The Morning comes, my Brother.

VOICE OF THE WOMAN

The Night is dark; the Night is dark and long.

IV

VOICE OF THE MAN

What now, what now, O Watcher!

THE WATCHER

Red as slaughter
The Darkness dies. The Light comes swift and
strong.

VOICE OF THE MAN

The Night was long. — What sayest thou, my
Daughter?

VOICE OF THE WOMAN

The Night was dark; the Night was dark and
long.

PANDORA

THAT 's my Pandora: look you, good as gold;
No evil in her. Yet, as once of old,
Zeus formed her namesake, she, in body and
soul,

Was made for man's allurements. He who stole
Fire from high Heaven, and so brought on Earth
A scourge of evils, was of not more worth
Than she, the woman, of whom we are told.

Now my Pandora's of the selfsame mold:
A sweet disturbance, filling every hour
With personality, that's kin to power;
But still concealing her immortal dower
Of love, like her, whom Epimetheus
Gave heart and soul to. — But I like her thus:
A woman through and through, with all the fuss
And fervor and nice curiosity
In all that we name life, whate'er it be,
Though at the last it may end evilly.

But *could* it end so? when, within her mind,
Like Hope shut in the casket, you will find,
Mid doubts, she keeps her faith in humankind.
Now looking at her there you'd never know
The fire of the faith which burns below —
That's my Pandora! — her chaste bosom's
snow.

ATTAINMENT

ON the Heights of Great Endeavor, —
Where Attainment looms forever, —
Toiling upward, ceasing never,
Climb the fateful Centuries:
Up the difficult, dark places,
Joy and anguish in their faces,
On they strive, the living races,
And the dead, that no one sees.

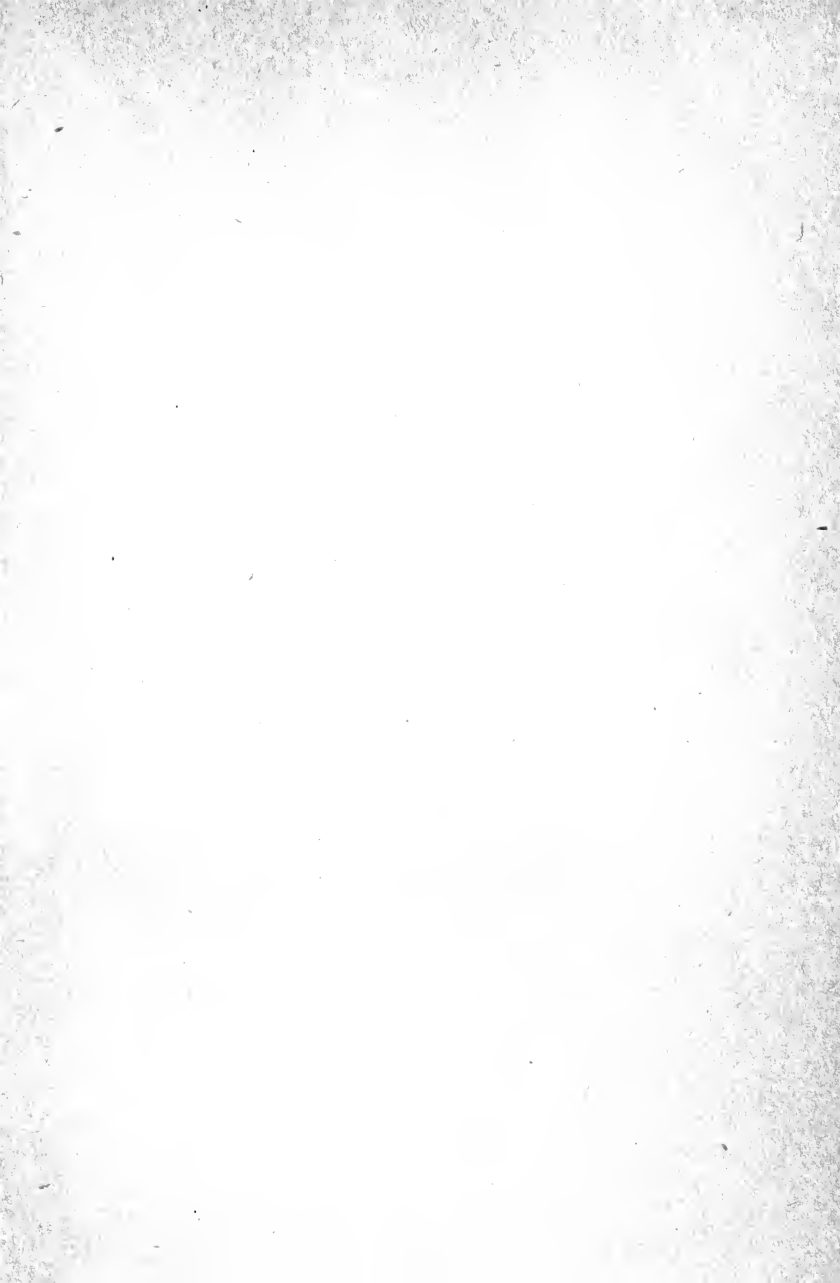
Shape by shape, with brow uplifted,
One by one, where night is rifted,
Pass the victors, many gifted,
Where the heaven opens wide:
While below them, fallen or seated,
Mummy-like, or shadow-sheeted,
Stretch the lines of the defeated, —
Scattered on the mountainside.

And each victor, passing wanly,
Gazes on that Presence lonely,
With unmoving eyes where only
Grow the dreams for which men die:
Grow the dreams, the far, ethereal,
That on earth assume material
Attributes, and, vast, imperial,
Rear their battlements on high.

Kingdoms, marble-templed, towered,
Where the Arts, the many-dowered, —
That for centuries have flowered,
Trampled under War's wild heel, —
Lift immortal heads and golden,
Blossoms of the times called olden,
Soul-alluring, earth-withholden,
Universal in appeal.

As they enter, — high and lowly, —
On the hush these words fall slowly: —
“Ye who kept your purpose holy,
Never dreamed your cause was vain,
Look! — Behold, through time abating,
How the long, sad days of waiting,
Striving, starving, hoping, hating,
Helped your spirit to attain.

“For to all who dream, aspire,
Marry effort to desire,
On the cosmic heights, in fire
Beaconing, my form appears: —
I am marvel, I am morning!
Beauty in man's heart and warning! —
On my face none looks with scorning,
And no soul attains who fears.”



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